Let
Christian Men
Be Men 2nd Ed.
1 Corinthians 16:13
Quit Ye Like Men
David Clarke

Let Christian Men Be Men 4th Ed.

I Corinthians 16:13
Quit Ye Like Men

By David Clarke
All things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purposes Rom. 8. 28

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

The following pages contain an account of real-life events, carefully recorded, to explain the reason for my withdrawal — or secession — from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church in the year of our Lord, 1984. I have written this record to uphold and affirm the biblical exhortation: "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 1:3), and to encourage the furtherance of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This work is offered especially for the benefit of any man who believes he is called of God to the gospel ministry — whether as a preacher, elder, or deacon — or for any sincere believer desiring to uphold and preserve the doctrines of grace, commonly known as the Five Points of Calvinism.

Should you, dear reader, perceive the seriousness of the issues I herein raise, and feel inclined to respond, I would count it a great privilege to hear from you. I am persuaded that what I have set down will, in the Lord's kind providence, serve to advance the gospel, and may prove a help to others on the same narrow path. If I may be of help to you — or you to me — in any spiritual way, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

A short list of further publications has been included at the close of this volume, which I recommend for your further reading and edification.

A Word About Bierton

Bierton is a small English village, located near Aylesbury in the county of Buckinghamshire. The Bierton Church — officially styled as "Strict and Particular Baptists" — was lawfully constituted in the year 1831, at a meeting chaired by the son of John Warburton of Trowbridge, Wiltshire, a noted gospel minister of his day. The church later aligned itself with the Gospel Standard cause, being formally added to their list on the 16th of January, 1981.

My departure was not a renunciation of all churches of that order, nor was I placed under any form of church censure. Rather, I withdrew peaceably from the communion at Bierton, as a matter of conscience before God. Under the strict rules governing church membership, I technically remain on the roll, since no act of church discipline was ever taken against me.[1]

Free in Conscience

By voluntarily parting from this society, I am now at liberty in conscience to recount my experience — not bound by man-made rule or by-law, but by the law of Christ only (Galatians 6:2). The official date of my secession was the 26th day of June, 1984.

Author's Note

I humbly ask the reader's forbearance in matters of grammar, spelling, and any typographical oversights. I left school virtually illiterate, and only began to learn to read after the Lord had mercifully converted me. I remain in need of a competent proofreader.

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Footnote:
[1] It is worth noting that in many Strict Baptist churches, church membership is retained unless formally rescinded by church action — even if the member ceases to attend.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Clarke remains the sole surviving member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, all other members having gone died. The penultimate member died some time ago, and the chapel doors were closed for public worship on the 22nd December 2002.

David's journey from a life of crime to faith in Christ is recounted in his book *Converted on LSD Trip* and *Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists*, wherein he documents his conversion on the 16th January 1970 and his subsequent joining of the Bierton Church in 1976. This present account, first published as *The Bierton Crisis 1984*, sets forth the reasons for his withdrawal from that church, prompted by serious matters of conscience.

The Bierton Church officially aligned itself with the Gospel Standard cause in 1981. Their Articles of Religion represent a refined and faithful expression of the 1646 Second Edition of the First London Confession of Faith, to which the Bierton Church was already broadly aligned. Nevertheless, this alignment stirred strong opposition from within and without the church,

placing David — then church secretary — in a difficult position. He believed the issues raised were weighty and had to be addressed in the fear of God.

David recounts his call to the ministry of the Word, which was recognised by the church and confirmed in January 1982. Commendation letters from Mr Hill (pastor of Ebenezer Chapel, Luton) and Mr Hope (pastor of Zoar Chapel, Reading), both Gospel Standard ministers, supported his call. His ministry took him to numerous churches across England, where he became increasingly aware of the trials besetting believers and the confusion troubling many congregations.

Quoting Isaiah 5:13, "Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst," David came to see that many of God's people were indeed perishing for lack of sound teaching and spiritual care.

As error crept into the Bierton pulpit — through a childrens hymn book espousing general redemption, teachings inconsistent with their Articles of Religion, and misguided reverence toward physical church buildings — David took a stand. For conscience's sake, he seceded from the fellowship in 1984 and privately published The Bierton Crisis, sending it to the Trustees and all parties concerned. Notably, the church never excommunicated him and hoped for his return.

David contended that once churches begin to elevate tradition above the Word of God, truth is sacrificed to maintain forms and customs, whether biblical or not. He observed that even those who began well could fall from grace — that is, depart from the doctrine and practice of the gospel — and slip into legalism and unscriptural teaching about the Law of Moses.

Being a Gospel Standard cause, the Bierton Church was subject to strict rules of membership. According to Rule 22, only the church itself can terminate a member's standing — a point of great significance in David's account.

During his time at Bierton, David confronted a range of doctrinal disputes then troubling the wider professing church. These included:

The contrast between Arminianism and sovereign grace;

Whether the believer is under the Law of Moses or governed by the Gospel;

The question of "gospel invitations" versus "free offers" (sometimes called Fullerism);

The content of the added Gospel Standard Articles;

Accusations of Hyper-Calvinism and antinomianism;

The place of women in the church;

The matter of head coverings;

The use (or rejection) of televisions and cassette recorders in worship.

David also became acutely aware of the sharp division between Gospel Standard Baptists and other Reformed or Grace Baptists, particularly over issues such as duty faith, the free offer of the gospel, and repentance. This division was highlighted after the closure of the Bierton Chapel, when the London Grace Baptist Association Ltd was given control of the chapel building and church assets by its trustees—who had rejected the Gospel Standard Articles of Religion. This decision was made without any consultation with David, who was one of the last remaining church members and was engaged in Christian missionary work in the Philippines at the time. They denied his membership and prevented him from reopening the chapel for lawful worship, and denied the Bierton Church were a Gospel Standard cause.

David maintains that:

Particular Redemption is scriptural and ought to be reflected in our hymns;

The Royal Law — the Gospel — is the rule of life for the believer, not the Mosaic Law;

The gospel must be preached faithfully, not offered indiscriminately;

The Gospel Standard's added Articles, while needing clarification, rightly reject offering Christ to the unregenerate;

Saving faith is a gift of God, not a duty required of the natural man;

Women are to be honoured in their place, but not appointed as elders;

Head coverings are a scriptural principle.

There is no spiritual merit in holy tables, buildings, or relics;

The use of television, radio, internet and such tools is a matter of individual liberty, not ecclesiastical control.

Let Christian Men Be Men (The Bierton Crisis) addresses these matters in detail and solemnity. David believes that the Lord Jesus Christ has called him to bear testimony to these events for the benefit of others. His desire is that this book might prove helpful, being written with all seriousness — as though engraved with *"an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever"* (Job 19:24).

Originally, David circulated this account only to those directly involved, out of courtesy and duty. He explained then, as now, that his conscience is not bound by church rules, but only by the law of Christ.

Even after his mission work in the Philippines in 2003, David sought to reopen the Bierton Chapel, still believing it to be his spiritual responsibility. Mr Crane, the church's former overseer at Lakenheath, confirmed that the church desired David's return and never formally severed ties.

This book is not an airing of grievances or personal attacks, but a testimony written from conviction, for the edification of others who may one day face similar trials.

PRELUDE

Love Covereth a Multitude of Sins

I expect some will be upset by the publication of this book. Some may say that names ought not to be mentioned, or that letters should not be quoted without prior consent. If such be the case, I ask forgiveness if offence is caused, for that is not my aim. But for the sake of truth, I cannot remain silent.

There is a Day coming — the great Day of Christ — when all things shall be revealed at His judgement seat (2 Cor. 5:10). I believe that if these matters are handled in the light, others may learn from my experience. May the Lord

give understanding and discretion to all who read.

"Charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). All the original members of the church have now passed away. I alone remain.

A Common Problem

It is my hope that this account might serve to prevent others from falling into similar troubles. Scripture says, "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his ass fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again" (Deut. 22:4). So, let us not withhold help from those who are stumbling.

Churches without pastors and those not ordered according to Scripture are at risk of the same decline, unless they are helped by the grace of God and remain faithful to the word of Christ: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

The matters I raise — from Particular Redemption, to gospel invitations, to Sabbath rest — are widespread concerns today. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6); "Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge" (Isaiah 5:13).

A Testimony For The Elect Of God

I earnestly pray that the gospel will yet be preached in this generation and that the elect of God will be called out unto Christ. May this testimony, imperfect as it may be, serve to glorify His name.

General Letter To Those Listed Below

Enclosed is a copy of my article The Bierton Crisis (Let Christian Men Be Men), written with my own hand. Each of you are mentioned in relation to these events — some by name, others by correspondence. I am aware it has been said I should have sought permission to use names or reprint letters. But the New Testament sets a precedent: letters were written, read aloud, and named both saints and adversaries. Ought we do otherwise?

May God give you discernment to judge righteous judgement. If this testimony be of any help to you, I give thanks to God. If correction is needed, I welcome it — provided it comes from a heart concerned for the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

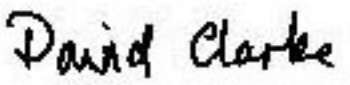
Please pray for me, my family, and for the remnant at Bierton. I have not ceased to love those with whom I once walked in fellowship. Who knows what the God of all grace may yet do?

This Letter is Sent To:

Mr Sayers, minister, Watford.
Mr Crane , o**verseer** of the Bierton cause, Lakenheath.
Mr Baumber, **trustee** and minister of the gospel, Bedford.
Mr Janes, **trustee** and deacon (Eaton Bray), Eddlesborough.
Mr Dix, minister of the gospel, Dunstable.
Mr Levey, deacon of the Baptist Church, Dunstable
Mr John Just, Dunstable.
Mr J Gosden, minister of the gospel, Southborough.
Mr Ramsbottom, minister of the gospel, Luton.
Mr Wood, minister of the gospel Croydon.
Mr Howe Aylesbury, former minister of the gospel, Ivanhoe.
Mr C. Lawrence, minister of the gospel, Harold.
Mr S. Scott – Pearson, minister of the gospel, Maulden.
Mr Royce of Luton
Mr Hope, minister of the gospel, Reading.
Mr Martin, **trustee**, minister Blunham Strict and Particular Baptist

The churches at: Evington, Oakington, Attleborough,
Bierton, Blackheath and Stamford.

In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ,



David Clarke
31st October, 1984

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen."

Church Rules And Church Business

In matters pertaining to church life, it is generally understood — as a matter of

courtesy and common sense — that discussions held in confidence amongst members ought not to be shared outside the fellowship without the express consent of the church. This principle is not unlike that which governs family life: private matters are to remain private unless those directly involved give permission to disclose them.

That said, there are circumstances of such gravity that they may and indeed must be spoken of — provided it be done wisely, appropriately, and with a view to honouring truth. Just as the law of the land requires a person to report any knowledge of a crime, so too in spiritual matters there may be occasions when silence would amount to complicity or cowardice. In such cases, one must act under higher authority — the authority of Christ Himself.

The Lord Jesus spoke plainly on this matter:
"*What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.*" (Matthew 10:27)

David Clarke believes that, for the cause of truth, and under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is both his right and his duty to speak of those issues which concern the honour of Christ and the integrity of His gospel.

As the sole remaining member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, David is, by default, responsible for all church affairs and the legacy of its testimony. In the first edition of The Bierton Crisis, he made it clear that his secession left him at liberty in conscience. No longer bound by the internal rules of that religious society, he considered himself governed only by the law of Christ. This liberty enabled him to stand publicly for the truth — and that he did, without bitterness but with a clear conviction.

Importantly, the church never terminated his membership. On the contrary, they expressed their desire for his return, which further confirms that his standing within the church was not revoked. His testimony, therefore, stands both lawfully and spiritually justified.

Connected Churches

The following churches:
Dunstable, Evington, Oakington, Matfield, Stamford, Leicester, Nottingham, Bradford, Ebenezer Luton, Oxford, Reading, Attleborough, Linslade, Colnbrook, Bedford, Rowley Regis, Prestwood, Blackheath, Walgrave, Fenstanton, Uffington, Grove, Ebenezer Luton, Tamworth Road.

In this publication (1984 edition), personal names have been removed in the interest of privacy

Fenstanton
Uffington
Grove
Tamworth Road

Note: In this 1984 edition, names of individuals have been respectfully removed in the interest of personal privacy.
(1 Corinthians 16:22–24)

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CHAPTER 1: Truth Causes A Division

"And he said unto them… suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division" (Luke 12:51)

The following account is drawn from sermon notes made before and after I preached at the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Chapel during our midweek meeting on Wednesday, 20th April 1983. I believe that this particular sermon was used as an instrument of God to lay the axe to the root of error and, sadly, marked the beginning of the division that would later lead to my formal secession from the church on 26th June 1984.

The Issue at Hand

The Bierton Church had long maintained a Sunday School, and each year a special anniversary service was held. For several years, Mr King — a member of the church and a minister sent out from our midst — had taken charge of these occasions. I was troubled to observe that, for the second consecutive year, Mr King had chosen two hymns for the children and their unconverted parents to sing: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so," and "There is a green hill far away."

What deeply concerned me was his public declaration that "Jesus loves them, each one." This, I believed, was presumptuous and unscriptural, particularly as there was no visible evidence that any of the children or parents professed saving faith or had been effectually called. Mr King, though a Gospel Standard minister, was promoting the doctrine of general redemption — contrary to our confession, which holds to particular redemption.

An Attempt to Address the Matter

On Wednesday, 20th April 1983, I delivered a sermon at the weeknight meeting, taking as my text:

"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8).

In applying this exhortation to the present state of our church, I gave direct examples. I suggested it would be a good work to restore a hymnbook that aligned with our Articles of Faith and did not teach general or universal redemption. I noted that such reforms might not sit well with our carnal

nature or with those visitore opposed to particular remption, but we were bound to truth — not tradition.

Examples Presented:

That we lacked pastoral oversight and were in need of a godly pastor or teaching elder.

That our Sunday School should teach truth, not error — namely, not to teach children that Christ died for them individually unless such was evident by faith.

That we ought to restore a suitable children's hymnbook, free from general atonement language, in line with our own doctrinal confession.

The Reaction

While preaching, I observed Mr King visibly shaking his head in disapproval — particularly when I stated that it was heresy to teach children that "Jesus died for each one of them." In a later conversation, he even said he knew not by what spirit I had spoken that night.

A Church Meeting Called

Following the service, Mrs Gurney inquired when a church meeting could be held to discuss the issues raised. A quarterly meeting was already scheduled for 27th April 1983 at 2:30 p.m., and so it was agreed that we would address matters there.

Extract from the Church Minutes

At the meeting, Mr King served as chairman and began by reading the 23rd Psalm. He stated that, as his one-year term as chairman was concluding, the church should soon appoint a new chairman — as he could not continue amidst current disagreements.

He then referred to Rule 15 of the Gospel Standard rules, declaring that no matters of serious importance could be raised unless formal notice had been given at the preceding meeting. Therefore, he ruled that the issues I raised regarding my sermon could not be discussed.

Mr King's Response to My Charges

Mr King insisted that I had brought serious charges against the Bierton Church and urged that the authority of the chair be respected. Despite the formal limitations, I voiced my concerns, stating it was unjust to leave

unaddressed the fact that children were being taught a doctrine inconsistent with our confession — namely, that Christ died for each of them individually.

Mr King reiterated that I was "out of order" and required permission to raise the matter. I replied that Rule 15 allowed exceptions in cases of serious disorder and that the matter should not be deferred a whole month, lest the cause of truth suffer harm. I considered the delay a tactic of the enemy and likened it, by analogy, to Cromwell's refusal to honour the so-called divine right of a king who ruled unrighteously.

Call for External Help

I then proposed we invite impartial and respected witnesses — ministers or trustees — to help us address the situation. I suggested Mr Hill of Luton or Mr Hope of Reading. Miss G. Ellis thought a less familiar minister might be better received. Miss B. Ellis proposed Mr Philip Janes, a trustee from Eaton Bray. The motion was seconded by my wife, Mrs M. Clarke, and passed by a vote of five to two.

I had assumed the role of temporary chairman to manage the proposal and, once it passed, I returned the chair to Mr King, who concluded the meeting in prayer.

Postscript in the Minutes

Mr King asked the church to grant him an honourable dismissal, expressing that I ought not to have joined the church knowing what hymns were sung in Sunday School. He felt I had no grounds to demand reform.

I replied that such a request could only be granted for just cause. Since Mr King had taught general redemption — in conflict with our Articles — I argued the church could not, in good conscience, license him to preach under our name.

A note was later added to the minutes, stating that the final paragraph of the postscript could not be confirmed by the church and would not be adopted as part of the official record.

My Observations

At this meeting, I saw what I can only describe as sanctimonious religion at work — twisting and squirming like a serpent. My conscience would not allow me to remain silent. I was compelled to speak plainly and oppose what

I believed to be doctrinal compromise.

Leaving the Meeting

In sorrow, my wife and I left the chapel. But to our great joy and encouragement, we encountered Mr Hill of Luton standing at Bierton Crossroads outside the Pentecostal Chapel — the very place I had left ten years prior due to their Arminian teachings.

As it turned out, Mr Hill had walked two miles along Burcott Lane coming from Luton, mistakenly thinking he was preaching at Bierton that evening. We believed his unexpected arrival was providential — sent of God to encourage and comfort us. We embraced him and shared all that had transpired. He exhorted us with the words: "Them that honour me I will honour" (1 Samuel 2:30).

That evening, after sharing tea together, we attended the service and heard Mr Goode faithfully preach the Word of God.

CHAPTER 2: My Method And The Problem

The letter reproduced below was written to Mr King and handed to him in person at our weekday meeting on Monday, 2nd May 1983. At that point, no one else in the church knew its contents until Mr King later read parts of it during a church meeting (see minutes: Unofficial Church Meeting – 19/10/1983). It was not an easy matter to address.

Letter to Mr King — 2nd May 1983

Dear Mr King,
Your conduct at our recent church meeting grieved not only me but also my wife, who is a fellow member of the church at Bierton. Your actions, I believe, have done more harm than good. Yet, thanks be to our God, who gives more grace and watches over His little ones — He will not allow His work in us to be destroyed but will turn even these troubles to the furtherance of His purposes.

Firstly, in your opening comments, you cast doubt on the spirit by which I preached at our Wednesday . You then attempted to shut down any discussion that might arise from that message, citing so-called "standing orders," insisting that serious matters could not be raised unless one month's notice had been given.

Even Mrs Gurney rightly expressed concern, saying it was not right to prohibit church members from speaking for an entire month.

Now, Mr King, let me correct you: Rule 15 of the Gospel Standard rulebook refers to motions — not to general discussion of serious concerns. You cannot invent new rules merely to avoid topics you dislike.

The rule means that any serious matter requiring a formal decision of the church must be proposed and left for a month before being voted on — not that such matters cannot be discussed at all.

Then came your charge — that I and others had joined the church only to create trouble. You also asserted that because I had not been baptised in Bierton under Strict Baptist authority, but elsewhere, my baptism was invalid — calling it a "Free Will" baptism.

You even suggested we should have stayed in the churches we came from, implying we had no right to participate fully in the life and oversight of this church. Such comments, from a minister and trustee, are wholly unbecoming.

The Real Issue: A Doctrinal Matter

I must ask: Are you, Mr King, hostile to the doctrines I'm seeking to uphold? Or are you careless in your choice of language when addressing children and unconverted hearers?

Either way, such conduct is at odds with the confessional foundation of the Bierton Church, and it is upon this basis that I take issue with you. My approach in the recent meeting may have seemed direct, but I did what was necessary to uphold truth and decency — to reign in, as it were, a runaway horse. Think of Phinehas, who acted swiftly when God's honour was at stake (Numbers 25:7–8).

You gave me the chair during that meeting, and I returned it once the matter had been rightly presented to the church.

God's Distinguishing Love

We do not believe — and never have — that God loves all individuals equally. Nor do we believe He loves all infants and children alike. The Word of God speaks plainly: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13).

And this was said of them before they were born, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand."

Therefore, we must take great care in the hymns we place before children — especially in the presence of unconverted parents. The hymnbook in use contains lyrics that contradict Scripture and our Articles of Faith.

This is not, as you call it, "changing Bierton," but rather restoring Bierton — a return to the old paths in Christian charity and love for Christ.

Your Other Accusations

You also criticised Rev. Stephen Scott-Pearson for wearing a clerical collar, accusing him of Romanist leanings. While it's true he wears such a collar on occasion, it's false to claim he promotes Romanism. You know full well that the very magazine you referred to showed Mr Scott-Pearson publicly protesting against the Pope's visit. He is known to be a faithful defender of the faith.

Can the same be said of you? For when I suggested hosting a meeting to address the dangers of the Papal visit, you refused — for fear of offending your Roman Catholic friends.

You again raised the matter of baptism, calling mine and others' a "free will baptism." What that term even means, I do not know. But I will say this: Bertha herself testified that it was only recently that the hymns in question were introduced. I challenged you about them last year — it was no longstanding tradition.

And let me remind you: it was you who brought the motion to align the church with the Gospel Standard — not I. Who then, I ask, has introduced change?

Trusteeship and Duty

As a trustee, you made a public vow before God, the church, and the world to uphold the doctrines stated in our Articles of Faith. If you do not believe them or seek to promote them, you are acting in contradiction to your sworn office — a serious breach not only spiritually but also legally.

Your concern should not be whether you're under scrutiny, but whether your teaching aligns with Scripture and the Articles you vowed to uphold.

We are not to lean on age as a defence either: "Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment" (Job 32:9). We are exhorted not to despise prophecy, but rather to "prove all things" and "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21–22).

My concern is not merely with the appearance of evil, but with an actual false doctrine — contrary to our confession and to the truth of God.

Distorted Views of Membership

It seems to me, Mr King, that you view those baptised at Bierton (under so-called "Free Grace" baptism) as legitimate heirs, and those baptised elsewhere as lesser members — unable to challenge what is taught, even if it contradicts Scripture. That view is entirely false and contrary to Christian principle. Lawful church members are those who believe and practise the truth, not those who merely have the right ceremony.

You say you're being subjected to an inquisition. But how then do you expect to receive an "honourable dismissal" to another church if you will not even subject yourself to the enquiry of the one you are in membership with?

My Final Charges

You have publicly suggested that I preached by an unclean spirit — a grievous accusation. My comfort is this: they said the same of our Lord Jesus Christ, calling Him a devil. You are the one, by your traditions, who sets aside the gospel and makes void its power.

You have cited, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," twisting Scripture to justify your conduct. But this is not liberty — it is licence.

You say I was out of order in opposing the chair. I reply: the chair was out of order when it acted against the rules. There is no "divine right of chairmanship." You had a week to reflect before the meeting — yet still you chose to oppose the cause of truth.

The Core Issue: The Love of God

To tell unconverted children that "God loves them each one" and that "Jesus died for them all" is false. It is not in keeping with Scripture, nor with the Articles of our church. It is not a good work to teach children — and their unbelieving parents — songs that express saving faith, love, and hope, when such things are not yet in them. These songs mislead and confuse — they are

not harmless; they are dangerous.

Let me be clear: I stand to preserve the doctrines of grace and the faith once delivered unto the saints. And I ask both you, Mr King, and the Bierton Church — is that your aim too?

Christian charity covers sins, yes — but only those covered by the blood of Christ. I am willing to forgive and restore fellowship, if there is a genuine display of grace and submission to God's Word. "Be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

I write in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, seeking not division but the peace of Zion.

Yours sincerely,
David Clarke

Postscript
For your own benefit, and for the sake of all involved, I am willing to submit everything I have written to the judgement of any faithful Christian or minister belonging to a Strict Baptist cause, in accordance with Matthew 18:15–17.

Mr King's Response and Further Efforts

Following this, I attempted to speak personally with Mr King. He was not home, so I left a note suggesting we meet with Mr Hope and Mr Hill, or another impartial minister, to help resolve our differences scripturally.
Mr King's Reply (28th May 1983)

"I am quite willing to meet Mr Hope at some convenient pre-arranged time. My heart — sorrow, grief, and contrition — is before God. 'May He forgive me my every sin.'"

This was a gracious tone, though I noticed no mention of Mr Hill. I responded proposing Mr Collier, pastor of Linslade, join Mr Hope — given his familiarity with our church.

Mr King replied (6th June) saying he had no objection, though he thought one witness was sufficient. He declined to involve Mr Collier, citing ill health.

I spoke to Mr Collier personally, who affirmed that particular redemption is biblical, and that the hymnbook needed to be changed accordingly. He advised me to speak again with Mr King directly.

Final Personal Conversation

I approached Mr King with great apprehension and explained that my original letter sought an apology, not for personal offence, but to defend gospel truth. We exchanged mutual sorrow, embraced, read Scripture, and prayed together.

At the time, I believed the matter had been resolved. But alas — it became clear that while Mr King accepted the personal tone of the dispute, he never came to grips with the doctrinal concern. He did not see the danger of denying Particular Redemption, and so the matter remained unresolved.

CHAPTER 3: Joining The Bierton Strict And Particular Baptists

At this stage, it seems right to explain how I came to join the church at Bierton. By 1973, I had become increasingly uneasy with the Pentecostal church I had formerly attended. Although I retained personal affection for the people there, I could no longer, in good conscience, continue among them — not while, across the road, there was a company of believers at the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, who professed the very truths the Lord had taught me.

Thus, I began attending their meetings as a hearer among the congregation, drawn by their testimony to the doctrines of sovereign grace.

The Doctrines of Grace: A Distinguishing Witness

I first came to Bierton in 1973, encouraged by a friend — Mr Alan Benning, from Wendover — who told me that the church upheld the doctrines of grace, and that Mr J. Hill, a Gospel Standard minister from Ebenezer Chapel in Luton, was soon due to preach at their anniversary service.

Eager to hear sound doctrine, I began attending their weeknight prayer meetings. I longed to hear once again those soul-stirring truths preached by the likes of William Huntington, William Gadsby, and John Kershaw. Their writings had done me much good — as they gave all the glory to the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation, and none to man.

Not long after I began attending, Mr Hill preached at the anniversary service.

I had no knowledge at that time of the church's manner of service, or how it was governed, nor of the variety of visiting ministers who came on the Lord's Day.

My Beliefs at the Time

By then I was thoroughly persuaded of the infallibility of Holy Scripture, that it was the sole and sufficient rule for all faith and practice. I believed in one sovereign, true, and living God — self-existent and eternal — yet revealed in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Not three gods, but One, in perfect unity of essence.

I believed that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Father, became truly man when He was born of the virgin. He did not cease to be God, but took upon Himself our human nature — yet without sin — and thus became the God-Man, the one Mediator between God and men.

It was this Jesus who had called me by His grace — not through the influence of any church or man, but directly, by the Spirit. It was this same Christ I sought when I attended Bierton and heard Mr Hill preach the doctrines of distinguishing grace with clarity and power. Aside from a recorded sermon by Dr Ian Paisley titled Second Mile Religion, I had not heard such preaching before.

Although I had once heard Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, his ministry did not dwell as deeply upon the doctrines of grace — though he clearly held to God's sovereignty.

Most churches I had attended up to that point were Arminian in doctrine — promoting a general love of God toward all mankind and a universal atonement, in contrast to the biblical doctrine of particular redemption.

Fellowship with Other Churches

Alan Benning also introduced me to the Strict Baptist Chapel at Linslade, where Mr Collier was pastor — another Gospel Standard minister. We attended an anniversary meeting where Mr Andrew Randall preached. I understood from our conversations that he had once been among the Brethren. He possessed a serious and doctrinally thoughtful spirit.

We began attending various anniversary services. I fondly recall visits to Waddesdon Hill Chapel, a Gospel Standard cause founded in 1752. We

would often travel together — myself, Alan Benning, Bertha and Ruth Ellis, and Grace Knight — to these meetings, which were sweet times of fellowship.

Joining the Church

In time, I wrote to the church at Bierton expressing my desire for membership. I believed this was my duty, having been born again and baptised as a believer. I wished to support the cause of Christ locally.

I was received into membership on 8th January 1976 — though not without a problem.

The Articles of Religion: A Difficulty

When the Articles of Religion were presented to me, I realised they did not match the original Articles set forth in the church's Trust Deed of 1831. Two articles, in particular, caused me concern — I could not, in conscience, subscribe to them.

I brought the matter to Mr Hill of Ebenezer Chapel, Luton, who understood my difficulty. After reviewing the documents, we found that no proper record existed as to how these revised articles had come into use. Therefore, the church was bound to its original Articles of Religion, listed in the 1831 deed — not the spurious additions.

The church kindly agreed that I could be received based upon my confession of faith and my adherence to the original 1831 articles.

The Two Problem Articles

Article XII: "We believe that Christ has set apart a day of rest, to be kept holy and for His honour and glory, which is the first day of the week, commonly called Sunday."
Referenced Scriptures: Mark 2:27, Acts 16:13, Hebrews 4:9

My concern was that these texts did not support the claim. In particular, Hebrews 4 does not refer to the seventh-day Sabbath, but to spiritual rest in Christ — as is beautifully expressed in Gadsby's Hymn 636. I felt the article confused the believer's rest with a legal Sabbath, failing to distinguish the gospel rule of life from the Law of Moses — a distinction upheld in Article 26 of the Gospel Standard Articles.

Article XVI: "We believe that all who die in their infancy go to heaven by

virtue of the death of Christ."
Referenced Scriptures: Matthew 19:13–15

Again, the verses cited do not teach this. The article seemed to deny the doctrine of original sin, and undermined the sovereign prerogative of God in mercy. Esau was hated before birth (Romans 9:11–13). Only those infants chosen in Christ will be saved — not all. And the scriptures nowhere state this belief explicitly. I could not affirm it as an article of faith.

Appointed Secretary of the Church

Not long after my admission, I was appointed as Church Secretary. This included responsibility for engaging ministers to preach throughout the year. I found it a serious task, and often difficult, especially as I was relatively new to such duties.

At one point, I had to handle correspondence from Colnbrook Strict Baptist Church, informing us that Mr Martin Hunt, one of our visiting preachers, was under church censure. I had found Mr Hunt to be pleasant and doctrinally sound — but it appeared the matter involved his views on particular redemption.

I asked Mr Hunt directly if he could subscribe to our original 1831 Articles of Religion. He replied that he could not. That settled it. The church, respecting Colnbrook's concerns, agreed not to invite him again. It spared us from entering into judgement over another church's discipline.

Concerns About Visiting Minister

While we enjoyed visits from many ministers across the country, it soon became apparent that there was great doctrinal variation among them.

Some held to the Gospel Standard Articles, others to the 1689 Confession, some to the Grace Baptist position of 1966, and others to Presbyterian views. Some preached duty faith and duty repentance. One preacher even stated he could not accept our 1831 Articles of Religion.

This mixture raised concerns for me.

A Call to Preach

As I listened to sermons from various preachers, I became increasingly troubled when truth was muddied or poorly expressed. I longed for clarity

and felt a burden to speak myself. I believe this desire stemmed from the day Christ called me — the day I first believed.

I had already spoken during weeknight meetings from the table (never the pulpit), but sitting in the pew began to feel burdensome when the preaching lacked precision.

I'd once heard of Bible colleges, but frankly, I was unimpressed. Many who attended them seemed not to be born again. I wanted God to teach me — not man.

Training to Teach

Nonetheless, I recognised the value of learning how to communicate. When I met my wife-to-be, she encouraged me to pursue teacher training. I enrolled at Wolverhampton Polytechnic, studied full-time, and in 1978 was awarded the Certificate in Education by Birmingham University.

Wolverhampton Teacher Training Group

David (B Centre Right) at Wolverhampton Polytechnic

My goal was clear: to learn how to teach well, so that I might teach the gospel with clarity and authority.

I began my first teaching post at Luton College of Higher Education in 1978.

Declaring My Call to the Church

It was during this period that I made my calling known to the church. Believing God had called me to preach Christ, I asked the church to consider my testimony.

The church invited Mr Hill (Luton) and Mr Hope (Reading), both Gospel Standard ministers, to examine my call.

Mr Hill asked about my views on the Law of Moses. I answered plainly: that Jesus Christ did not need to fulfil the Law to become righteous — for He was always righteous. The law merely declared His righteousness. Justification for us comes by faith in His imputed righteousness — not by our own works under law. The believer's rule of life is the gospel, not the moral law.

Both Mr Hill and Mr Hope were satisfied and agreed that I should be encouraged to preach.

Sent Forth to Preach the Gospel

The church gave its blessing, and at a weeknight meeting, brethren from Oxford, Eaton Bray, and elsewhere came to hear me preach. From that time in 1982, letters began arriving from churches across the country inviting me to preach.

I was overwhelmed. I could easily have preached three times each Lord's Day and several times during the week — all while teaching full-time at Luton College and studying with the Open University.

In the space of a short time, I preached at fifteen Gospel Standard churches across the land. It was a work begun not by my striving, but by the call of Christ and the sending of the Church.

CHAPTER 4: Visitors And Strict Communion

Having now given an account of how I came to join the Bierton Church, my service as Secretary, and the circumstances surrounding my call to preach, I now turn to further difficulties that arose following the notable church meeting on 27th April 1983 — detailed earlier in Chapter 1: Truth Causes a Division.

Soon after that meeting, another matter came to light, again concerning Mr King and the doctrine of particular redemption. I found myself, yet again, the object of criticism and held in derision by those who were quick to judge and slow to discern.

Mr Levey Preaches at Bierton

On 1st May 1983, we had invited Mr Douglas Levey — a deacon from

Dunstable Baptist Church — to preach at our morning and evening services. As was our custom, the evening service would be followed by the Lord's Supper, and the minister preaching that day would typically lead it.

However, after the evening meeting, Mr Levey approached me with a concern. He asked what he should do, as he was not a member of a Gospel Standard church, and Bierton had recently become one. Furthermore, his home church at Dunstable did not practise Strict Communion, as we did. Thus, by the terms of the Gospel Standard Articles and our own trust deed, he was not in a position to administer — or even partake in — the Lord's Table with us.

Before I could respond, Mrs Evered, a member of the church, came and told me, in no uncertain terms, that I was to conduct the communion service myself.

I was immediately troubled. It was not fitting for a woman to give instructions regarding the ordering of public worship. Moreover, given the unresolved matter of general redemption being promoted in the Sunday School — and the lack of repentance from those responsible — I knew I had to act carefully and with conviction.

I briefly told Mr Levey that he would need to follow my lead, as things were out of order and I felt duty-bound to address it properly.

My Public Statement

As we re-entered the chapel from the vestry, I addressed the congregation, explaining that Mr Levey was not in membership with a Strict Baptist church, and I asked him to confirm this. He did. I then stated that, based on our church's governing principles and Gospel Standard association, he could not partake of the Lord's Supper with us.

Some in the congregation clearly disapproved — their faces said as much — but I stood firm. If we had joined ourselves to a denominational body with stated rules, then those rules must be followed. I had not personally led the church into Gospel Standard affiliation — they had done so of their own accord.

I invited Mr Levey to remain seated in the chapel while we observed the ordinance. It grieved me to do it, but I believed it necessary for the sake of

order and conscience. To his credit, Mr Levey responded graciously and said he understood.

A Letter from Mr Levey

Ten days later, I received a letter from him, dated 10th May 1983, in which he explained that he had casually mentioned the matter to Mr Kenneth Dix, his pastor at Dunstable. Mr Dix, to Mr Levey's surprise, had reacted strongly and taken it upon himself to write to me directly.

Mr Dix's Objection

In his letter, Mr Dix expressed his dismay, stating that Mr Levey had been "shamefully treated," and that my actions had "humiliated" him and undermined his ministry. He accused me of applying man-made rules rigidly and lacking Christian kindness.

He further argued that if a man were permitted to preach, he should also be permitted to join in the communion — otherwise, it created a sacramental imbalance, elevating the ordinance above the preaching of the Word. He concluded by suggesting that if Bierton were to continue in this manner, we should not invite ministers like Mr Levey to preach at all.

My Response to Mr Levey

In reply to Mr Levey (12th May 1983), I expressed regret for any distress caused and explained that the matter would be brought before the next church meeting, as it had broader implications.

I clarified that while I held the Word of God above all ordinances, our Articles of Faith — and the absence of a pastor — meant that decisions regarding the Lord's Table had to be handled cautiously. I assured him that my actions were not personal, nor did they call into question his standing in Christ. I believed that had we a pastor, things might have been handled differently.

My Response to Mr Dix

To Mr Dix (1st July 1983), I wrote in defence of my actions and the church's order. I explained that:

The Bierton Church had joined the Gospel Standard cause, and

Our trust deed affirmed Strict Communion,

We had no pastor to exercise discretion in individual cases,

And therefore, in the absence of such oversight, the written Articles had to rule.

I reiterated that the church had a duty to uphold its confession, and that while I did not believe the ordinance should be placed above the preached Word, faith and doctrinal integrity must come first.

I noted that William Huntington, Augustus Toplady, or John Newton would likely not be barred from preaching in a Strict Baptist chapel — despite not being Strict Baptists themselves — because faith precedes order. But that principle did not apply to communion, which is a matter of church discipline and covenant membership.

Other Incidents: Mr Peter Howe

I also made mention of another similar case — Mr Peter Howe, former minister of the Ivanhoe Particular Baptist Chapel. He and his wife had visited Bierton on the first Lord's Day of November 1982, and requested to partake of the Lord's Supper.

Knowing that Mr Howe:

Was no longer in church membership (as Ivanhoe had closed),

Held views contrary to our confession (duty faith, duty repentance),

Had recommended Andrew Fuller's book, The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation,

And upheld the Ten Commandments as the believer's rule of life,

I felt unable to allow them to partake. I spoke to them gently and respectfully, and later wrote to them to explain our position.

Mr Howe's Gracious Reply

To his credit, Mr Howe responded with kindness and understanding. Though saddened by the experience, he said neither he nor his wife were offended. He expressed concern that churches had become cold and unwelcoming — and even suggested he felt more warmly received in pubs than in many

churches.

He concluded with a gracious word, wishing my family every blessing in 1983.

The Church Approves

I reported the correspondence to the church at our 6th July 1983 meeting, and the members agreed with my actions.

Conclusion: A Matter of Order and Faith

These matters — concerning visitors and Strict Communion — were not simply procedural. They revealed a deeper issue: the need for godly order in the absence of a pastor, and a recognition that truth, not sentiment, must guide church practice.

In each case, I acted not out of malice, but out of reverence for the Lord's ordinance and in the fear of God. As Jude exhorts, "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude v.3).

CHAPTER 5: Evangelical Repentance

Looking back, I now believe I ought to have spoken more plainly to Mr Howe on the matters of repentance and doctrinal truth. At the time, I was acting only as a private member of the church — I held no public office, such as deacon or elder — and therefore I lacked the authority to speak on behalf of the church. Had I held such an office, I would have had the duty to state our doctrinal position clearly, for the sake of truth and Mr Howe's spiritual good.

In hindsight, I should have been far more forthright with him, especially as we were, by then, a Gospel Standard cause. As such, it would have been both right and necessary to explain any doctrinal differences to visiting believers or enquirers — especially on matters so central as repentance toward God.

Mrs Evered's Erroneous Views

Around that same period, I was already aware that Mrs Evered, a prominent member of the church, held erroneous views regarding the doctrine of repentance. This became apparent when she objected to the use of the term evangelical repentance — a term used by Mr J. Tanton during a sermon he preached at Bierton in 1982. The matter was raised formally at the church meeting on 13th October 1982.

Church Meeting, 13th October 1982 – Transcript Excerpt

Mrs Evered took exception to Mr Tanton's use of the words evangelical repentance, arguing that the phrase does not appear in the Bible. No formal action was proposed, and none of the other members raised any objection. As church secretary, I reminded the meeting of Article 26 of the Gospel Standard Articles of Religion, which addresses this very issue and outlines our responsibility in such matters.

I felt compelled to write to Mrs Evered personally, in the hope of correcting her misunderstanding.

Letter to Mrs Evered – 13th October 1982 Evangelical Repentance

Dear Mrs Evered,

Re: The term evangelical repentance as used by Mr Tanton on Lord's Day evening, 19th September 1982.

May I offer some reflections which I hope may clarify the matter. The term evangelist in Scripture refers to one who brings good news — see Acts 21:8, Ephesians 4:11, and 2 Timothy 4:5. The Protestant churches since the Reformation have long been called Evangelical churches for this reason.

The word repentance is also thoroughly scriptural. You'll find it throughout the New Testament — Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, and John 16:7–8, among others.

Scripture, in fact, sets before us various kinds of repentance:

Natural repentance, born of conscience (Romans 2:4–5).
National or outward repentance, such as that of Ahab (1 Kings 21:29), and the hypothetical repentance of Tyre and Sidon had they witnessed the works of Christ (Matthew 11:21).

Hypocritical repentance, seen in Israel's feigned sorrow (Psalm 78:34–37; Hosea 7:16).

Legal repentance, worked by fear of consequences — as seen in Pharaoh (Exodus 9:27), Judas (Matthew 27:4), and Cain (Genesis 4:13).

These, at best, are external works and often found in reprobates. They fall under what Paul called "the sorrow of the world, which worketh death" (2 Corinthians 7:10).

But then there is evangelical repentance, which Mr Tanton spoke of. He may not have defined it in full, but what he meant was something very real.

This kind of repentance is not a legal duty imposed upon all men. It is a free grace blessing, a gift of God — and our Article 26 makes that clear. Evangelical repentance flows from the Spirit's work in the elect. He convicts of sin, gives light to see the vileness of sin, and applies the blood of Christ to the conscience.

This is no mere sentiment. It is a gospel blessing — one that the Word of God invites penitent souls to rest in.

Consider: Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 1:18; Jeremiah 3:12–13; Luke 24:47; Acts 5:31; and 1 John 1:7–9.

This kind of repentance is taught throughout the writings of Dr John Gill, whom the Gospel Standard churches esteem highly. It is the same doctrine preached by William Gadsby, William Huntington, John Warburton, and J.C. Philpot.

You may also wish to consult the Gospel Standard Magazine, September 1967, where this subject is further addressed.

I trust this helps clarify the distinction. I myself have been greatly exercised over this matter and am persuaded that Article 26 represents a sound and biblical position — even if its wording could benefit from some clarification.

With Christian regards,

David Clarke

Mrs Evered's Response

Her reply was brief and dismissive. She said my points were not relevant and stated she had already spoken to another minister — unnamed — who agreed with her view that there was no such thing as "evangelical repentance."

She would not identify the minister nor further explain her reasoning. The matter was simply left unsettled.

Mr Howe and the Gospel Standard Articles

The relevance of all this was underscored when Mr Howe later approached the church to partake in the Lord's Supper. The question of evangelical repentance came up again — not in name, but in substance.

Mr Howe, as I had known since the early 1970s, did not accept the added Gospel Standard Articles of 1878. He rejected the doctrines of duty faith and duty repentance, yet also took issue with Article 26, which opposed them. He held views drawn from A.W. Pink's book The Total Depravity of Man, which I had read — but disagreed with in parts.

When Mr Howe asked to commune with us, I found myself deeply troubled. We were now a Gospel Standard cause. Could I permit communion with someone who disagreed with our doctrinal basis — particularly on repentance and saving faith?

An Unsettled Difficulty

I began to see that the issue was bigger than just Mr Howe. If I, as a church member, upheld what our Articles taught — while others, like Mrs Evered, denied them — then we would appear to our visitors as a house divided.

Had I spoken openly to Mr Howe about these matters and done so as a representative of the church, while some of our members continued to oppose the doctrine of evangelical repentance, then I would be left exposed and unsupported.

Worse still, the church would be out of order — a divided body making conflicting statements.

Conclusion: Truth Must Be Defended

It became clear to me that confusion and doctrinal error had crept into the fellowship. There was a lack of clarity concerning repentance, saving faith,

and the place of free grace. Article 26 — which should have been a guardrail — was misunderstood or outright denied by some within.

Yet the matter was never properly resolved. Many were of the opinion that it was better to leave such things alone — they would, they thought, "sort themselves out in time."

But I have never believed such thinking. And sadly, the issue was never settled in a biblical way.

CHAPTER 6 : The Children's Hymn Book

In this chapter, I recount the efforts made to address a troubling matter: the teaching of children to sing hymns that contained doctrines contrary both to our Articles of Religion and to the Scriptures themselves.

The Burden of Responsibility

Unless one has walked this path, it's impossible to fully grasp the anxiety and spiritual weight that such matters bring upon a man's soul. Yet they had to be faced. Truth was at stake — not opinions, not tradition, but the revealed truth of God. And truth must be preserved, no matter the cost.

I found myself entirely alone in this endeavour — none of the church members seemed willing to stand with me. Only my dear wife supported me in the matter.

The Church Meeting — 15th June 1983

The meeting opened with a reading from 1 Corinthians 11:20–30 — a most suitable portion, considering the solemnity of what was at hand.

This was a special interim meeting, convened to bring before the church certain correspondence from two respected men:

Mr P. Janes, a trustee of the chapel, and

Mr B. Ramsbottom, minister of the gospel at Bethel Chapel, Luton.

Before these letters were read, the minutes of the 27th April 1983 meeting were reviewed. At that point, Miss G. Ellis raised a query regarding the postscript. She asked what was meant by the statement that Mr King should no longer preach — specifically, what views or teachings were being referred

to.

I explained plainly that the views in question were these: Mr King had taught the children — and their unconverted parents — that Jesus had died for each one of them, and that God loved them all.

Discomfort Over the Minutes

It was clear that the minutes caused discomfort among some of the members. It was suggested that the offending paragraph be removed, so as not to bring embarrassment to Mr King or mislead future generations.

As secretary, I replied that the minutes exist not to reflect personal preferences, but to provide a truthful and accurate record of what actually took place. If the church disagreed with what occurred, it could be dealt with openly — but the record should remain true.

Since some members claimed they couldn't recall the postscript accurately, it was agreed that a clarifying note would be added — but a full removal of the paragraph could not be carried by vote.

To resolve the impasse, the chairman signed the minutes at the end of the main section, leaving the postscript unendorsed. This satisfied most, though it exposed once again the spirit of compromise and unease regarding Mr King's doctrine.

Let it be noted: Mr King has never denied the charge — that he taught universal love and general redemption in the Sunday School. He has never, to this day, retracted the statement that Jesus died for each child individually.

Women's Influence and Voting Power

This meeting only confirmed what had become increasingly obvious: the system of congregational voting, particularly where women exercised influence, was deeply flawed. The Apostle Paul's teaching on the matter is not ambiguous (1 Corinthians 14:34–35; 1 Timothy 2:11–12).

The idea that women — however well-meaning — should be determining matters of doctrine and church order through motions and votes is entirely unscriptural.

Purpose of the Meeting

I informed the church that this meeting had been called for two main reasons:

A. To read and consider the letters from Mr Ramsbottom and Mr P. Janes (trustee), both addressing concerns about the Sunday School's teaching.

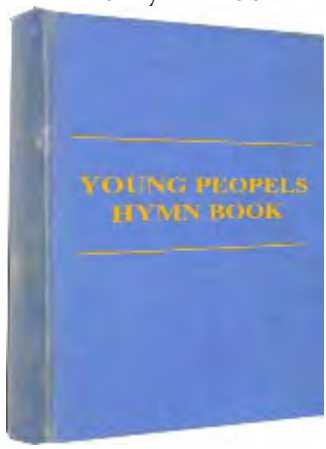
B. To read a letter from Mr Dix of Dunstable, following the earlier issue concerning Mr Levey and the communion service (as discussed in Chapter 4).

The Letters Read Aloud

Both Mr Ramsbottom's and Mr Janes's letters were read aloud. Each supported the doctrinal position set forth in the Bierton Church's 1831 Articles of Religion, particularly with regard to particular redemption and the need for care in teaching children sound doctrine.

During discussion, the idea of changing the hymn book used in the Sunday School was raised. However, the teachers defended the hymns in question, claiming they merely quoted Scripture (e.g. Isaiah 53:6) and that the words "all" or "everyone" were intended in a limited sense.

The Hymn Book



The London Association Of Strict Baptist young Peoples Hymn Book

The Hymns in Question

Two hymns, in particular, had caused concern:

"There is a green hill far away"

"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so"

Mrs G. Ellis suggested that hymns ought to be selected more carefully.

Mrs Gurney, however, proposed that the church retain the current hymn book as it stood. Her motion was carried by vote of the church.

My Concern

My concern being that the love of God is eternal and unchangble towards his elect as they are loved with an everlating love. Thus it cannot be said or taught that such love is towards all mankind.

1. Jeremiah 31:3

"The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

This verse explicitly says God's love is everlasting and is the reason He draws people to Himself.

2. Malachi 3:6Verse

"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

While this doesn't mention love directly, it establishes God's unchangeable nature, implying that His love, like His being, does not change.

3. Romans 8:38–39

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Our Articles of Religion plainly declare that all men are born guilty and sinful by nature, through the fall of Adam. Children, no less than adults, inherit this sinful nature; for, as it is written, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

4. Romans 3:23 (KJV)

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

This is one of the clearest and most direct statements in Scripture about the universal guilt of mankind. It forms part of the Apostle Paul's argument in the Book of Romans that both Jews and Gentiles alike are under sin and in need of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Thus, despite all the objections, despite the external counsel, and despite our Articles of Religion, the church voted to retain hymns that teach general redemption.

Mr Ramsbottom's Letter (2nd May 1983)

To the Church of God at Bierton,

Beloved friends,

Mr David Clarke has visited me and brought your church's request. In the fear of God, I have tried to put down a few thoughts on Sunday Schools which I hope will be helpful.

I have sought to avoid personalities and keep to principles.

Desiring your real spiritual welfare,

With Christian love,

Yours sincerely,

B. Ramsbottom

A Summary of Mr Ramsbottom's Points

The purpose of a Sunday School is to teach the Word of God, clearly and simply — but without compromising truth.

The doctrine taught must fully agree with the church's Articles of Faith and the preaching from the pulpit.

Teachers must be gracious, doctrinally sound, and — ideally — members of the church.

Care must be taken in hymn selection. Even well-loved hymns may contain serious doctrinal error.

Teaching children that Jesus loves them all and died for each one is wrong if we believe and preach particular redemption.

Some hymns present all children as "lambs," yet in Scripture a lamb signifies a believer, not simply a child.

Sentimentality and looseness in appointment of teachers undermines the seriousness of gospel instruction.

Mr Janes's Letter (Trustee)

Philip Janes took a pastoral tone. While seeking to avoid division, he admitted that popular children's hymns often provide a false sense of security, and are not doctrinally sound. He too questioned the appropriateness of "Jesus loves me this I know," and "There is a green hill far away."

He feared that people often repeat religious practices unthinkingly, unaware they may be out of step with Scripture.

In his own words:

"I don't think there can be any doubt that the hymn 'Jesus loves me' is not suitable… it gives a false sense of security and is not doctrinally correct."

He also stressed that churches must not, through habit or sentiment, teach another gospel, even unintentionally.

My Reflections After the Meeting

Despite the wisdom and concern expressed in these letters, the church voted to retain the hymn book. My own testimony, supported by the letters of two respected witnesses, was disregarded — especially by the women, who dominated the discussion and voting.

Once again, I was left asking: What am I to do now?

The matter was clear. The hymns were unsound. The doctrine was compromised. The church had been warned. But the majority — in the

name of charity and tradition — chose sentiment over truth.

I stood alone. But I believed then — and believe now — that it was truth, not popularity, that mattered. And truth, though often unpopular, is still the Lord's.

GHAPTER 7: I Consider Leaving The Church

It was around this time I began to earnestly consider leaving the Bierton Church. I had come to a solemn conclusion: truth was no longer the guiding principle behind our faith and practice.

I had wrestled long in prayer. I had contended, with a heavy heart, for the faith once delivered unto the saints. But what I observed increasingly was a people more attached to tradition and sentiment than to sound doctrine.

I now had two children, and twins on the way. I longed for them to be raised in a place where truth was not diluted, where the whole counsel of God was declared without fear or compromise. If the Scriptures revealed that God hateth all workers of iniquity, the children ought to know it (Psalm 5:5). If the Word taught that God loveth His elect, then let that be told plainly.

But I could not, in good conscience, remain among a people who upheld a sentimental universalism — however kindly they spoke, or long they had walked in outward religion. That was the very sort of doctrine I had come out from during my wanderings through the Arminian wilderness of Aylesbury, the very system Mr King once told me I ought never to have left.

So I announced to the church that I intended to leave. We placed our house on the market. We thought perhaps we could move closer to my place of work, maybe settle and worship at Eaton Bray, where there seemed to be more like-minded people.

Providential Hindrance

At the time, my wife was heavily pregnant, due to give birth in November. If we were to relocate, we felt the matter must be decided swiftly.

We received an offer on the house almost immediately — our first viewer. But despite looking at properties in Eaton Bray and Eddlesborough, and even speaking with folk at the chapel, doubts began to surface.

And then, quite suddenly, the sale fell through. Our prospective buyer pulled out.

With the twins nearly due, and the sense that perhaps the Lord was restraining us, we resolved not to proceed with the sale. Instead, we would stay put — and continue the struggle at Bierton, if need be alone, for truth's sake, even though the people found such contention tiresome and inconvenient.

Church Meeting – 6th July 1983, 2:30 p.m.

At this meeting, the letter from Mr Dix was read aloud — the one protesting my refusal to allow Mr Levey to partake in the communion service (see Chapter 4). I informed the church of a letter I had received from Mr Levey himself, in which he disagreed with Mr Dix entirely and approved of the action I had taken. He said he was not humiliated.

I also explained that it had been Mrs Evered who had insisted I conduct the communion that evening, and that I had done so in line with our recently adopted Gospel Standard Articles of Religion, which restrict communion to members of churches practising strict communion.

I then told the church I had written to both Mr Levey and Mr Dix — expressing regret if I had caused undue offence, and giving them both a full account of the situation.

Some members said they were still unsettled by the incident, but they agreed no further apology or explanation to Mr Dix was needed. It was then proposed — and carried — that only Strict Communion Baptist ministers should be invited to preach on Sundays when the Lord's Supper was to be observed, to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Mr King Steps Away

Later in the meeting, Mr King requested to be excused, leaving behind two letters for the church to read.

Mr King's Letter – 15th June 1983

My Dear Friends,

God, who knows me through and through, prompts me to leave this little note with you.

My failings are many. The ability to remain composed in argument or debate is not among my virtues. Rather than be led into saying things I may regret, I feel it wiser to express my thoughts in this way.

After much prayerful sorrow and earnest consideration, I am fully persuaded that, at least for a time, I cannot remain in fellowship with the Church at Bierton.

Only the Lord knows whether this will be temporary or permanent.

Please pray for me.

God bless you all. Deeply sorrowing — forgive me.

Christian love,
Arthur

Mr King's Second Letter – 6th July 1983

My Dear Friends,

The Lord, knowing my weakness in body, mind, and spirit, prompts me once more to write.

I agreed to chair the church meetings for one year. That time has now expired. David has letters from me declining further preaching engagements for 1984.

While I remain in membership, it is in name only. My constant prayer before God is that He will show me His way — even if it be painfully so — from under the burden and pressure of these past months.

Enclosed is my letter of 15th June, which shows something of my concern at that time.

"I waited patiently for the Lord…"

May God bless you all and forgive me.

Arthur King

Church Response

As secretary, I confirmed that Mr King had requested to be relieved of his December preaching appointment, and that henceforth, if I were present on a weeknight, we would hold only a prayer meeting.

It was agreed that Miss G. Ellis and I would approach Mr King, subject to his consent, to further understand his decision and spiritual state.

My Own Letter to the Church – 5th July 1983

To the Church at Bierton,

May I explain the reasons for my recent intention to leave the fellowship, and lay bare my mind in the fear of God.

1. The Church is No Longer Governed by Scripture

It has become clear to me that the governing principles of the church — as reflected in our discussions and decisions — are not drawn from the Word of God.

Example 1: The rejection of Mr Scott-Pearson's ministry, on the grounds that he sometimes wore a clerical collar, used the title Rev., and was a Particular Baptist rather than Strict.

These are not biblical grounds for disqualification. In fact, they are man-made traditions.

Example 2: The mistreatment of Mr Lawrence. If the church had believed he was in error, Scripture commands his restoration in meekness (Galatians 6:1), not cold dismissal. Had he preached false doctrine and persisted, that would be another matter. But he was judged not on biblical grounds.

It is grievous when a church is quicker to defend traditions than to uphold gospel truth. When the Pope visited Britain last year, some objected to any protest taking place at our chapel for fear it would upset certain friends.

Example 3: The teaching of general redemption to children in Sunday School. When I raised concerns, you were unmoved. Rather than examine the charge, your reaction was defensive. The response was not like that of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 7:11) — there was no clearing of yourselves, no carefulness.

I do acknowledge that you are without a pastor, and this must be taken into account.

2. Family and Domestic Reasons

My wife finds it difficult to cope — with the lack of young families, the ongoing church tensions, and my own absences while preaching elsewhere.

Scripture says, "If any provide not for his own… he hath denied the faith" (1 Timothy 5:8).

Therefore, for the sake of my family and the honour of God, I believe it may be necessary to move to a fellowship where spiritual help is more readily available, and where my wife and children can flourish.

Whatever the outcome, I know this: God shall direct our steps.

David Clarke

The Church's Response to My Letter

Miss G. Ellis expressed that many would be sorrowful if the Bierton Chapel were ever closed. She said it would be a sad day if such a thing occurred. She believed the church should continue — that God is the same wherever we worship.

This seemed to be the general sentiment of the remaining members: keep going, hold fast to what we've known, and avoid rocking the boat.

But I could not walk that path. I had not come into the Gospel to preserve tradition, but to follow Christ — even if that meant walking alone.

CHAPTER 8: A Decision To Stay

Having come to the sober conclusion that we could not leave Bierton unless the Lord Himself opened up a clear way for us, I determined in my heart to remain and continue the good fight for Gospel truth—even if it meant disturbing the peace of the entire congregation. My next encounter was to be with Mrs Evered, who ironically had been the very person who encouraged our church to join the Gospel Standard cause. One would have assumed, therefore, that she'd have been grounded in sound doctrine. Sadly, this proved not to be the case.

Battle Number Three

Thus began what I now call Battle Number Three. And I write these pages for the benefit of any soul who finds themselves in a similar position. For I came to see with great clarity that those "inhabitants of the land" are indeed subtle—appearing as moral, upright folk, strict in their Sabbath observance and wary of worldly influences such as tape recorders, televisions, or so-called "evangelical newspapers"—yet beneath the surface lurks a legalistic spirit and superstition that is most dangerous.

The Holy Table Incident

The incident occurred one Sunday morning before the service. I was helping my young niece put on her cardigan and happened to rest it momentarily on the chapel's communion table. Immediately, Mrs Evered sharply instructed me to remove it. "That table is a holy vessel set apart unto God," she declared, "and must not be used for any secular purpose."

I was stunned. I had never heard anything like it—not in all my Christian life. I said nothing at the time, but the matter deeply disturbed me. So, on the following evening (a Monday), I visited Mrs Evered at home to address it properly.

Heretical Notions Concerning Holy Things

It became abundantly clear that Mrs Evered held superstitious and heretical views regarding the chapel building and its furnishings—views more akin to Roman Catholicism than the faith once delivered unto the saints. Given the seriousness of the matter, I felt compelled to write to her. Here follows my letter in full:

Letter to Mrs Evered

Dear Mrs Evered,
As a minister of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, I write out of concern—not only for your own soul's welfare but also for the honour of Christ and the witness of the church at Bierton.

On the Lord's Day morning past, you instructed me to remove my niece's cardigan from the table at the front of the chapel, calling it a "holy vessel unto the Lord". When I later questioned you about this, you stated confidently that you had been taught these things since you were a girl, that the chapel is "the House of God", and that the communion table must not be used for any secular purpose, lest it be deemed sacrilegious.

I must tell you plainly: these views are heretical and cannot be left unchecked. There are no such "holy vessels" under the New Covenant to be reverenced in worship—whether they be tables, pulpits, tablecloths, or chapels. As it is written, "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands…" (Heb. 9:11).

All such vessels in the Old Testament were divinely appointed for a time, and were sprinkled with blood (Heb. 9:21). They served as shadows pointing to Christ and ceased with the Levitical priesthood, "until the time of reformation" (Heb. 9:10).

The chapel is not the "House of God". It is a building of bricks and mortar. "God that made the world… dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24). The true temple now is the church—the body of Christ. As the apostle wrote, "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

In view of all this, I must admonish you. If your beliefs are based upon tradition or superstition, and not the Word of God, then they are not of the Spirit of God. Such views, if unchecked, can render you an instrument of Satan when church decisions must be made.

I urge you, for your own sake and for the peace of the church, to submit this matter to the judgment of another minister—preferably one known among the Gospel Standard churches. I am confident none of our ministers would support your position.

Until this matter is resolved, I regret to inform you that I cannot accept your assistance in the secretarial work of the church.

Yours in concern,

David Clarke
Minister of the Gospel

Zechariah 7:11 in Practice

Mrs Evered refused to read the letter and returned it to me unread. It reminded me of that scripture: "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear" (Zech. 7:11).

She later claimed that all the members of the chapel agreed with her. This was said privately in the schoolroom while others were still gathered in the chapel.

I immediately called the members together and told them what she had said. To my surprise, some seemed sympathetic. When I declared that I would not tolerate such superstition while I remained a member, Miss Gwen Ellis left abruptly, expressing frustration that I was so determined.

Thus the heresy was exposed.

An Unresolved Matter

What was I to do now? I was but a private member of the church, with no formal office. We had no pastor, no elder. I was left wondering—were we even functioning as a true church?

CHAPTER 9: A Dream

Background to the Dream

This chapter shares a dream I had and how it led to another effort to restore order at Bierton Chapel.

The Dream and Its Effects

On Sunday, the 29th of September, I was preaching at Oakington, Cambridgeshire. That night, I dreamed a dream. But to explain it properly, I

must first give a little background.

Ruth Ellis, a member of our church at Bierton, had by this time been moved to the Bethesda Home in Harpenden. She had been unwell for some time, and her behaviour—though not malicious—was sometimes erratic and difficult for her family and others to deal with. At times, she was quite unreachable in conversation, causing frustration to those who tried to help.

Despite this, Ruth had once been a great help to me in spiritual matters. Our conversations had always revolved around the Lord Jesus Christ, His truth, and our shared experience of grace. She had an extraordinary memory for hymns, particularly those from the Denham and Hart collections, and even in her poor mental condition she could recite them at length to anyone who asked.

In company, however, she often said things that made little sense, and sadly, many dismissed her with a wave of the hand—"Oh, that's just Ruth—she talks nonsense." And so they ignored her.

But I always tried to connect with her, despite the difficulty. I believed her struggle lay not in understanding but in finding the right words. Even so, we had some truly precious moments discussing the rich truths found in the hymns she quoted. I felt deeply for her, especially when others treated her as if she were mad.

Now, to the dream.

In the dream, I found myself among those I once considered friends. We were gathered in a reception room—not unlike one you'd find in a hotel—and I began to speak on a matter, though I cannot now recall exactly what. But to my dismay, they all turned on me—not physically, but in spirit. Their unspoken message was clear: "Oh no, you're wrong—not just wrong, but beyond the point of no return in your thinking. We know the scriptures, not because we've studied them, but by who we are—and you, well, you've lost the plot."

They decided the best course was to ignore me altogether. I was lost, in their eyes, and not worth their time. Their approach was polite but hollow—just as they treated Ruth: smile and nod, but disregard every word I said.

The sense of loneliness and isolation I felt in that dream struck me to the very core. It gave me a painful insight into what Ruth Ellis must have felt—cut off, dismissed, treated as mad. I woke up in tears and shared the dream with my wife. That experience stirred something deep within me. I resolved then and there to speak the truth of God, even if it meant being branded a madman—for to me, truth was worth more than the favour of any man.

As for the individuals in the dream, their identities mattered little. One, I believe, was a member of a nearby church, but their names were of no consequence.

Further Attempts to Resolve Disorder

Following these troubling events, I felt it imperative that we do something to address the disorder in our church. Though I had no formal authority, I called a church meeting for the 19th of October, 1983.

Present were: Mr A. King, Miss B. Ellis, Mr C. Member, Mrs Evered, myself (D. Clarke), and Miss G. Ellis.

Mr King opened the meeting in prayer and read from 1 Corinthians 13. He then felt compelled to explain the decisions and actions he had taken in recent months. He spoke of a nervous complaint that had affected him physically, and that the affairs of the church had certainly not helped his condition.

Mr King referred to a letter I had written to him on 2nd May 1983. He had shared its contents with the deacon of the Linslade church. Although Mr Collier was their pastor, his age was seen as a reason not to involve him in controversy. I had suggested Mr Collier might help mediate, but that came to nothing.

What surprised me next was that Mr King stepped away from the communion table and sat on a separate chair he had placed earlier. He said he could not read from my letter while standing at what he called "The Table of God." He read selected parts of my letter but not the full content—something I found troubling, as the partial reading cast the letter in an unfavourable light.

Mr King then said he had hoped the church would have secured a chairman to oversee the meeting, as he had requested on several occasions. He also reminded us of his earlier desire to be relieved of preaching duties in

December. After this, he left the meeting.

As church secretary, I pointed out that we could not continue without proper governance. Each of us bore responsibilities towards one another—and toward Mr King, as long as he remained a member.

I then proposed that, given the disorder in the church, we urgently seek someone to act as overseer, until such time as we could function properly again. I named Mr John Gosden, a Gospel Minister from Kent, as the most suitable man I knew for the task. I also suggested one of our trustees, Mr P. Janes of Eaton Bray, be asked to assist in setting things in order.
Mr John Gosden was the son of Frank Gosden, the long-time minister at Galeed Chapel in Brighton. I had once visited Mr. Frank Gosden at his home in Brighton while considering joining the Bierton church. During that visit, I shared my testimony, and he graciously gave me his personal set of Dr John Gill's Exposition of the Whole Bible, in six volumes—a gesture I've never forgotten.

Given the seriousness of the matter, we agreed it would be harmful to delay a month (even though the Gospel Standard's rule 15 stated that one month's notice should be given for such decisions). The proposal was put to the church and carried by vote. Mrs Evered suggested we also consider asking Mr Ramsbottom of Bethel Chapel, Luton.

Help from Mr J. Gosden – His Response

I wrote to Mr Gosden straight away to request his help. Sadly, he was unable to take up the responsibility, as the following letter explains:

Tunbridge Wells
24th October 1983
To: Mr David Clarke

Dear David,

Re: Church at Bierton
Thank you for your letter of 19th October. After prayerful thought and consideration, I have my initial opinion confirmed—that as much as I would like to assist, the distance (about 100 miles) and my many heavy responsibilities here make it physically impossible for me to be involved.

I feel sorrow at the evident lack of godly leadership and unity in the fellowship, especially as I recall how different things once were. May I therefore suggest that you revisit the foundational principles of what it means to be a Christian church.

A true church is a gathering of God's people—those who have, by grace, known the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ. In their midst there should be:

A. Church Government by Men
Discipline and governance carried out by men who are called, equipped, and qualified by God to rule on His behalf (Ephesians 4:11–16). Only matters previously weighed and agreed upon by these men should be brought before the church.

B. Preaching of the Whole Counsel of God
This must be done by those called of God to do so:
"How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" – Romans 10:14–15

C. Administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper
These are outward testimonies of union with Christ, and a sign of unity among the brethren:

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized... and they continued... in breaking of bread... with one accord." – Acts 2:41–46

Where any of these elements are seriously lacking, it is doubtful whether, in the sight of God, a Gospel church still exists.

If you believe your present situation meets that description, you have two options:

Appoint from among your own MALE members those qualified according to 1 Timothy 3—men in whom all have confidence and respect.

If that is not possible, then seek oversight and discipline from a properly constituted Gospel church near Bierton, remaining under their care until God raises up men from among you who can take responsibility.

I trust these thoughts are helpful. My inability to assist further is not due to any lack of love or concern, but simply because it is not feasible from this distance.

My Christian love to you all,

Yours sincerely,

John Gosden

CHAPTER 10 : Events Turn For The Worst

One would hardly believe that a few professing the fear of God could behave in such a manner as now unfolded. But the events which I shall now relate show the downward spiral that beset us at the Bierton Church.

Prayer Meeting: 26th October 1983

It was a weeknight meeting. Mr King read from Jeremiah chapter 33, and emphasised verse 3: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." He offered a few comments, then I was to read from Ezekiel 14.

Four Members Walk Out

Before the reading, I made a few introductory remarks—words that evidently touched a nerve, for four of the seven present got up and walked out. I was left astonished. The remaining members, Mrs Gurney and Miss B. Ellis, shared my surprise. Never in the history of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church had anything like it occurred.

My comments were not made to provoke, but sprang from a heavy heart and a burden of truth. The letter received from Mr J. Gosden lay fresh upon me (a letter not yet shared with the church save Mr King). Ezekiel 14 seemed apt, and I, as a minister of Christ, felt compelled to speak.

Introductory Words

I recounted how Mr King had earlier emphasised the blessed truth of calling upon the Lord and His promise to answer. I bore witness to that very promise, having experienced it personally. The Lord had saved me out of a life of sin—drug-taking, drug-dealing, and criminality. No church brought me in, nor was I raised in one. The Bible itself became my teacher. I called,

He answered.

Before coming to the Bierton church, I founed none that believed the doctrines of Grace that I had received. It wasn't until I found Bierton that I recognised kindred belief—a savoury worship, hymns rich in free grace, justification by faith, and the sovereignty of God.

Now, being called to preach, I must speak of the great things God hath shown me. If I err, let it be shown to me. But the word of God must govern.

On the House of God

I had begun to learn something troubling: that many were equating the term "House of God" with the physical chapel building. This, I pointed out, was an error.

Scripture teaches us the old temple was destroyed, as Jesus foretold. The types and shadows of the first covenant have found their fulfilment. Now, the temple of God is the people of God, those built as living stones, called by His Spirit.

Our buildings, our tables, our pulpits—they are not holy in themselves. No longer do we have holy vessels. We have the living Church, and Christ is the head. I had heard, even from some among us, that the communion table was a holy vessel and that the chapel was the House of God. But these notions are nowhere found in the New Testament.

A Member Speaks

At this point, a member challenged me: "Is not this the House of God?" pointing to the chapel walls. Another stood and said, "This is more like a church meeting," and with that walked out, followed by three others—Miss G. Ellis, Mr King, and Mrs G. Evered. A fourth, not a member, also left. Only Mrs Gurney, Miss B. Ellis, and I remained.

Closure of the Meeting

Shocked but undeterred, I closed the meeting in prayer, asking the Lord for wisdom and deliverance. I then addressed the two remaining, assuring them that they must do what they believed to be right—if they thought I ought to leave for peace's sake, or if another minister should address me, then so be it.

I showed them the scripture, 1 Timothy 3:15, which defines the House of God as the Church, the pillar and ground of the truth. Not brick and mortar, but the living assembly of the redeemed.

We left with heavy hearts.

The Dream Recalled

Then I remembered the dream I had shared in the previous chapter. Could these be the very people from that dream? Was there something more in it than first supposed?

The answer, I believe, was becoming more and more evident.

CHAPTER 11 : Communion Refused

At this time, we were without a pastor and I held no formal authority from the church. I felt utterly lost. No one seemed to grasp the issues at hand, and it appeared as though I was being viewed as the root cause of our disorder.

Withdrawing from Communion

Given the chaos in our midst, I could not, in good conscience, partake of the Lord's Table that month. I therefore withdrew from the communion and asked Mr Crane of Lakenheath, who was our visiting minister and unaware of our circumstances, to excuse me—though I gave him no explanation at the time.

Refusal to Conduct the Communion

Because these disorders were unresolved, I could not, in faithfulness to Christ, continue the practice of communion while such disunity prevailed. I prepared a statement and read it to the church at our weeknight meeting in November 1983. That statement, read aloud, was as follows:

> *"It is the custom of the Bierton Church to observe the Lord's Supper on the first Lord's Day of each month, and for that service to be conducted by the minister engaged to preach on that day. I am scheduled to preach on the first Lord's Day of December 1983, but I must express my deep concern to the church.*
>
> *I abstained from the communion on the first Lord's Day in October for a number of reasons, but these may be summarised thus:*

We are not united in the truth. There exists variance among us, and to act outwardly as if we are in harmony—when inwardly we are not—is to pay lip service to a holy ordinance. Such hypocrisy dishonours the communion of the body of Christ.

To illustrate this disunity, I must raise six pressing matters of disorder, none of which have been resolved in a manner that honours the Lord Jesus Christ."

Matters of Disorder

1. Mr King's Position

Mr King considered himself a member in name only. He requested to be relieved from preaching at Bierton in 1983, though he did not decline other preaching invitations. It was only at a recent informal church meeting that he gave any explanation. This ambiguity left the church in disorder, and such matters must be resolved properly.

2. Teaching General Redemption

When I raised the inconsistency of teaching general redemption to children and their unsaved parents—whereas Scripture teaches particular redemption—the church showed no concern. In fact, some were offended I brought it up. This revealed deep doctrinal disunity.

3. Doctrinal Division Among Preachers

Both Mr King and I were licensed to preach at Bierton, yet we stood in direct opposition on the matter of general vs. particular redemption, and the love of God toward the elect versus His hatred toward the reprobate.

I uphold that:

"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." — Romans 9:13

I believe Christ died only for the elect and that God's love for them is eternal and unchanging. Male members must be of one mind on such matters to properly serve the church.

4. Religious Practices of Mrs Evered

Mrs Evered insists on her own religious practices, believing them right even when they are clearly unscriptural. She has attempted to impose these upon others. When I resisted, both privately and publicly, it caused strife—and the church wondered why.

5. Walking Out of a Prayer Meeting

At one recent meeting, Miss G. Ellis, Mrs Evered, and Mr King walked out in protest of comments I made in good faith. I spoke sincerely, without malice, referencing the communion table, church building, and current heresies linking them to Old Testament forms. Their reaction showed the depth of disagreement. If such views go unchecked, we remain out of order.

6. **Dishonourable Handling of Visiting Ministers**

A previous decision regarding Mr Lawrence, a visiting minister, demonstrated our flawed approach to conflict. Mrs Evered objected to him preaching again, citing her reasons. Another member then suggested it was best to avoid inviting him for a year—purely to keep the peace. The church agreed. But this is not scriptural. We are to deal with any fault rightly, not sweep it aside for the sake of "peace."

These six examples show clearly we lack effective church governance. Without officers to set things in order, we remain disordered. Therefore, until these matters are resolved, it would be wrong to observe communion. To do so would be to disrespect the Table of the Lord—a metaphor for the communion of the saints.

> *"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." — 1 Corinthians 11:29*

In good conscience and in the fear of God, I refused to conduct or partake in the communion service until the church repents and sets things right. We are accountable before God to do so.

David Clarke
Minister of the Gospel

Church Response

Some members asked whether the communion might simply be moved to another Sunday with a different visiting minister officiating. They disagreed with my refusal to serve. However, due to a shortage of available ministers, there were none to preach on the first Lord's Day in January, February, or March. I remained available—but only if the church resolved its differences.

Attempts to Remedy Our Disorders

By this point, our disorders had not only multiplied, but begun to weigh heavily upon all involved. It was evident something had to be done. So, I called another church meeting with the express purpose of seeking to "set in order the things that are wanting," as the Apostle Paul instructed Titus.

> *"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city..." — Titus 1:5*

Church Meeting — 14th December 1983

Members Present:
Miss B. Ellis, Mrs C. Gurney, Miss G. Ellis, Mrs Evered, and myself, David Clarke.

Acting Chairman:
David Clarke

Opening:
A reading from 1 Corinthians 2 was given, followed by prayer.

I began by explaining that, strictly speaking, this was not an official church meeting, as we had no duly appointed chairman. This, I believed, was the reason for Mr King's absence. However, the seriousness of our situation compelled us to meet. Disorder had taken deep root, and we lacked any functioning form of church governance. Each member had read Mr Gosden's letter and understood he was unable to assist us.

A letter from Mr King was read, in which he explained his absence and reaffirmed his decision not to attend any more meetings. He claimed he had made this clear previously, but Miss G. Ellis disagreed, stating that she had not understood his intentions at all. She also questioned whether decisions affecting the whole church could be made in his absence.

I clarified that while Mr King may not have been fully clear at our last meeting, his intentions were now evident. Yet it was also possible his absence stemmed from our failure to appoint a formal chairman—had we done so, perhaps he would have attended. The other members agreed this might be the case.

I reiterated that pressing matters had built up and required immediate attention, yet we lacked the structure to deal with them. It was agreed that we needed someone to act as an overseer.

Mr Ramsbottom was suggested, though I reminded the group he had already indicated in previous correspondence that he was extremely busy. I then proposed that rather than burden one man with the full weight of oversight, we might consider appointing two or three individuals.

I recommended we ask Mr C. A. Wood of Croydon, and if he believed additional help was needed—perhaps from one of our trustees—he could say so. The members agreed. I reminded them that previously we had only ever secured a chairman, not a true overseer or elder. But our present disorder made it clear: we needed the biblical oversight of an elder.

Mrs Evered voiced her objection. She felt we ought to sort out our problems before involving someone like Mr Wood. I explained that the gravity of our disagreements demanded a biblical ruling from one in spiritual authority—something none of us, by ourselves, had the standing to carry out.

Charges of Heresy

At this point, Mrs Evered objected strongly to being accused of heresy by me. She defended her practices of reverencing the communion table, the vestry, and the building. She denied being a Pharisee or having Roman Catholic leanings, though she admitted these accusations had been made against her in her home.

Her argument was that a heretic is someone who departs from traditional church teachings in favour of their own opinions—and that she did none of these things. She claimed that everything she believed had been taught to her from childhood and was therefore correct.

I responded that such a disagreement must be settled biblically, not

sentimentally. Since she had sought to press her views upon me publicly, I had been duty-bound to resist her. However, I lacked the authority of the church to pass judgment—hence the need for a scriptural overseer.

The House of God?

I asked Mrs Evered to supply any scriptural basis for her practices—particularly her reverence for the communion table, the vestry, and the chapel building. In response, she quoted from introductory remarks made by Mr G. Collier when describing the ambience of Benjamin Keach's chapel in Winslow.

I asked her whether she would likewise reverence Anglican or Roman Catholic buildings. She said she would, though not their religion. I responded that no such reverence should be given to man-made structures—let alone idolatrous temples like those of the Papists. The other members appeared to agree.

I then read from 1 Timothy 3:15:

> *"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."*

I added that the Lord seeketh worshippers who worship Him in "spirit and in truth" (John 4:23), not in reverence to physical tables, buildings, or vessels.

The true church is made of "lively stones," a spiritual house, not bricks and mortar. Such truths, I explained, the Pharisee and the Romanist alike fail to comprehend.

Gates of Zion Misapplied

Miss G. Ellis then asked me to explain the verse:

> *"The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." — Psalm 87:2*

I explained that the "gates of Zion" refer not to physical doors, but to the public ordinances of Christ's ministry: preaching, prayer, the reading of scripture—these are the means through which the Lord meets His people.

Mrs Evered retorted that I could not see the truth of her position. I replied that I saw very clearly that her views were superstitious, heretical, and akin to Romanism. Just as Pope John Paul II denies idolatry when reverencing the Black Madonna, she denied error in reverencing a man-made table and building. But holiness cannot be infused into wood and stone by human sentiment.

I warned of the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., and recalled what the Lord did to Shiloh:

> *"Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh... and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." — Jeremiah 7:12*

I added, "I would not be surprised if the Bierton chapel burned to the ground, if such superstitions continued." This was met with a gasp—"Oh never!"

I insisted again: without scripture, we cannot settle anything. We needed biblical governance.

Discussion of Oversight, Naming People, and Sabbath Disputes

The Need for Oversight

I explained to the church that I myself would benefit from the aid of an experienced overseer—someone to speak with as matters arose, to offer scriptural guidance. The church, as a body, was responsible before God to deal with these issues honourably and not brush them aside. It was agreed that both Mr King and I should speak with Mr C. A. Wood, detailing matters from the beginning, so that proper order might be restored.

Mrs Evered's Objection to a Sermon

At this point, Mrs Evered raised a fresh objection to a previous sermon of mine, wherein I had said that the devil reigns over men in the world. She denied this outright, claiming Satan would only be bound during Christ's millennial reign.

I replied that while God is sovereign over all things, Satan is described in scripture as the "god of this world" who blinds the minds of the unbelieving (2 Corinthians 4:4). His being "bound," as it were, signifies a limitation imposed by God—he may do no more than he is permitted to do.

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven... And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years." — Revelation 20:1–2

The binding is metaphorical, not literal. Satan operates only by divine permission, and within divine restraint.

On Naming People Publicly

Miss G. Ellis then commented that it was improper to name people from the pulpit or in letters. She felt it was undiplomatic, and Mrs Evered agreed, saying that ministers listed with the Gospel Standard never did so.

I disagreed. I reminded them that the Apostle Paul named people in his epistles:

"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." — 2 Timothy 4:10

"Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil." — 2 Timothy 4:14

"Ananias, hearing these words, fell down, and gave up the ghost." — Acts 5:5

It was not worldly diplomacy that governed Paul—it was divine inspiration. Ministers must speak truth, naming names when necessary, and not be muzzled by the traditions of men.

Don't Speak of Things that Offend?

Mrs Evered then requested that I refrain from preaching on topics that might cause offence, especially those matters she disagreed with.

I answered candidly: I do not speak to offend, nor to provoke, but to be faithful to God. If the church believes something I've said is unbiblical, they must judge it by the scriptures:

"Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." — 1 Thessalonians 5:20–21

But until proper church government was re-established, we had no mechanism to do so.

Sabbath Day and Moral Law

Mrs Evered then questioned whether I believed in keeping the Sabbath Day holy and observing the moral law.

I replied that if she kept the Sabbath, she did well—but she must understand what it meant. The Sabbath Day, as given under the Law of Moses, was the seventh day—Saturday—and could not be changed (Galatians 3:15). It was a covenantal sign for Israel, now fulfilled in Christ.

> *"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days." — Colossians 2:16*

The Lord's Day—the first day of the week—is not the Jewish Sabbath. It is the day of resurrection. I believe the Gospel is now the believer's rule of life—not the Ten Commandments, which were part of a covenant that is now fulfilled in Christ. This view, I reminded her, is upheld in Article 16 of the Gospel Standard Articles of Religion.

Teaching Electronics — Is It Worldly?

She then asked if my profession as an electronics lecturer—teaching the use and maintenance of televisions and video equipment—was consistent with the calling of a gospel minister.

I replied that I found no contradiction between the two. My trade, though related to things in the world, was not ungodly. Paul was a tentmaker; Christ Himself was a carpenter. Labour is honourable when conducted righteously.

Conclusion of the Meeting

It was agreed we would invite Mr C. A. Wood of Croydon to assist us at Bierton. The meeting closed with prayer.

Mr Paul Crane Appointed as Overseer

In light of our ongoing difficulties and the failure to secure Mr Wood's help due to his existing commitments, it was suggested at one of our weeknight meetings that we ask Mr Paul Crane of Lakenheath to act as overseer. He had already ministered among us regularly and was known to the congregation.

Those present—Mrs C. Gurney, Miss B. Ellis, Miss G. Ellis, and myself—agreed to this proposal, and I was instructed as Secretary to make the necessary arrangements. It was also agreed that Mr King and I should meet

with Mr Crane beforehand to explain the nature and history of our troubles. However, Mr King declined to be involved.

I contacted Mr Crane immediately. He responded kindly and agreed to help. I made arrangements to visit him and fully brief him on our affairs.
Church Meeting — 18th February 1984, 2:30 p.m.

Members Present:
Mrs I. Clarke, Miss B. Ellis, Miss G. Ellis, Mrs C. Gurney, Mrs Evered, and myself, David Clarke.

Chairman:
Mr Paul Crane of Lakenheath

The meeting opened with the singing of a hymn, followed by a reading from 1 Corinthians 11 and prayer.

Purpose of the Meeting

As Secretary, I introduced the meeting and summarised the events that had led us to this point. I reminded the church that no communion service had been held since November 1983. The purpose of this meeting, I said, was to "set in order the things that are wanting" (Titus 1:5), by the grace of God.

I explained that Mr King would not be attending. He had stated, in no uncertain terms, that if the church wanted to dismiss him, they could do so—but he would not be participating in any more meetings. He had told us he felt better in himself, and was at home if any member wished to speak with him privately. His wife would also be present.

Mr Crane confirmed that he had received a letter from Mr King, in which he described, to some extent, the nature of his nervous complaint. Mr King made it clear that the state of church affairs had not helped his condition in the least.

Mr Crane then reminded the church of our responsibilities—both as a body and as individuals—to seek peace and put things right in truth and righteousness.

Oversight Appointment

I explained to the church that Mr Crane had kindly agreed to serve as

overseer, provided the church was unanimous in its request. I outlined the authority which would be entrusted to him as follows:

To govern the church of God at Bierton according to the Scriptures.

To have access to church records, minutes, and all related documents.

To enquire of each member regarding matters of the church.

To offer spiritual counsel to any member seeking guidance.

Before proceeding further, Mr Crane asked that we first settle whether the church would formally appoint him to this office.

He explained that although the church might still invite another minister to conduct services, it would be improper to do so unless his role was first clarified. After all, this meeting had been convened specifically to settle issues of church order.

Matters of Reverence and Legalism

Mrs Evered voiced the longstanding belief among some members that the church building and communion table were to be reverenced. She claimed that Scripture taught that "the vessels of God's house were holy".

I responded that there were indeed several matters which needed to be dealt with, now that we had means to do so. However, we could not deal with all issues at once—especially in Mr King's absence. Still, if the church agreed to settle these things in due course, there would be no reason to abstain from the communion or from taking the service.

Mr Crane spoke next about differing upbringings. As a child, he recalled that all the children in his chapel remained absolutely silent during worship. By contrast, Bierton's Sunday School children came from very different backgrounds—most from non-Christian homes—and this made a considerable difference. He urged the church to show grace and not to be overly censorious when differences arose.

Legalism in Practice — The Nappy Incident

At this point, Mrs I. Clarke expressed how out of place she had felt in the Bierton church, to the extent that she had considered leaving altogether. She

cited the pressure to conform to others' ways—ways she felt were oppressive.

One particular example stood out: after a Sunday meal at Bertha Ellis's home, the twins' nappies needed changing. Ruth, in a spirit of helpfulness, took them and rinsed them out. This drew immediate disapproval from Mrs Evered, who insisted such an act was wrong on the Sabbath.

Such legalism, Mrs Clarke said, was exactly the kind of burden she found difficult to bear.

Mr Crane, to his credit, responded with compassion. He hoped such incidents would not result in her departure, and that the matters at hand could be peaceably resolved.

True Worship and the Nature of Sacred Space

Mr Crane commented that the phrase "reverencing the table" seemed excessive, though he could understand the idea of showing respect. He affirmed that "the house of God" is where God meets with His people—and that may be anywhere. He added that every day should be as a Lord's Day to the believer, for Christ is our true Sabbath.

Mr Crane's Appointment and Final Matters

I informed the church there were several matters I hoped to discuss privately with Mr Crane, all of which pertained to church order. I admitted these matters were not easy to deal with and I didn't claim to have all the answers. But through biblical discussion and godly counsel, I believed we might resolve our difficulties. Such a process, I said, might not only benefit us but also be of help to other churches facing similar trials.

Mr Crane stated he would be willing to take on the role of overseer—provided the church was unanimous in its request.

The matter was put to the vote. All present agreed. The church then officially invited Mr Crane to serve as our overseer.

He graciously accepted the office.

Church Minutes Reviewed

With Mr Crane now formally in place, we turned to the approval of previous

church meeting minutes, specifically those from 19th October, 14th December, and January. Before approval was sought, Mrs Evered brought up matters recorded in the minutes.

She claimed the church's troubles dated back to Easter 1983 and stemmed from a letter I had sent to Mr King, which she described as being filled with nothing but condemnation. I confirmed the content of that letter and reminded everyone that the entire issue was already included in the official minutes Mr Crane had received and read. These matters would now be handled properly, with scriptural oversight in place.

I also reminded the church that the letter had been written after the church meeting on 27th April 1983, and that Mr King had only read parts of it at the 19th October meeting, which painted the content in an unfair light.
Mr Crane noted that many matters were recorded in the minutes and not all could be dealt with at once, but he would see to them in due course. No one objected to or amended the minutes. No formal motion was made, but their correctness was generally accepted.

Statement on Communion Withheld

I referred to a written statement I had circulated earlier, which explained why I had refused to partake in or officiate the communion since October 1983. Due to time constraints, the statement was not re-read at this meeting. However, it was agreed the issues within it would be addressed in the proper course of time.

Mrs Gurney asked directly, "Why can we not take communion?"

She was reminded that this was not the meeting to deal with that specific question, though it would be treated in due course under Mr Crane's guidance.

Teaching General Redemption to Children

I raised an objection to a hymn being taught to the children—Hymn 169 from the Young People's Hymn Book (S.B.S.S.A.)—as it clearly conveyed the doctrine of general redemption:

Show me the scene in the garden of bitter pain,
And the cross where my Saviour for me was slain…

This hymn was to be sung publicly at Easter, even though it had been clearly pointed out (multiple times) that it taught Christ died for the children personally—something we cannot know unless and until they are effectually called by grace.

This went against our belief in particular redemption, that Christ died for the elect alone, and is not to be proclaimed indiscriminately. This was not merely a matter of preference but a question of doctrinal integrity.

This issue had also contributed to the wider disorder between Mr King and myself and remained unresolved.

Mr H. Sayers – Another Doctrinal Concern

I also made reference to a visiting minister, Mr H. Sayers of Watford. Doctrinal concerns had arisen from his preaching, and I informed Mr Crane that this was another matter needing discussion and resolution.

Mr Crane signed the church minutes and invited any member to speak with him privately or raise concerns they wished to be brought up in future meetings.

It was provisionally agreed to hold the next church meeting either in the last week of March or the first week of April.

Mr Crane then closed the meeting in prayer.

Concluding Remarks

My conclusion after this long and painful process was sorrowful but firm: the prevailing views of the majority at Bierton were so far removed from biblical truth—and from the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith—that no faithful minister or pastor adhering to those doctrines could honestly align themselves with the church's current position.

CHAPTER 12: Mr Sayers and the Gospel Standard Articles

At this time, a mutual friend informed me that Mr Sayers, of the Watford Strict Baptist cause, disagreed with the Gospel Standard Articles of Religion. Since Mr Sayers had been invited to preach at Bierton Chapel and I was acting as church secretary, I felt compelled to enquire into the matter.

Mr Sayers offered little information when I spoke with him directly, so I

contacted Mr D. Crowther, a deacon at the Attleborough chapel, to learn more about any disagreement between Mr Sayers and their church. Mr Crowther kindly shared with me a letter from Mr Sayers, in which he outlined his views on the issues of duty faith and duty repentance. From this, it was evident that Mr Sayers held views contrary to the Gospel Standard doctrinal position.

Mr Sayers' Letter to Mr Crowther (25th February 1983)

In his detailed reply, Mr Sayers raised four primary points. I summarise them here, paraphrased for clarity, while preserving the theological concerns expressed.

1. Who is meant by "all" in verses such as 1 Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9?

Mr Sayers interpreted these passages as referring to all mankind in a general sense, similar to the sentiment expressed in Ezekiel 33:11, where God declares no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He acknowledged the doctrine of election but held that God's revealed will was that all should repent and believe—even though only the elect ultimately would. He argued that if it were not God's will for men to repent, God could not justly condemn them for failing to do so.

2. To whom are the Gospel exhortations addressed?
Mr Sayers maintained that Gospel calls, invitations, and commands were to be proclaimed to all without distinction. He cited Mark 16:15–16 and John 7:37–38 to support this, arguing that Gospel invitations divide hearers, with only the elect responding. He described the Gospel as wide in its presentation but narrow in its effect, and felt it would be a "miserable Gospel" if it were limited in both.

3. God's common love to mankind
While affirming God's hatred of sin, Mr Sayers argued that God's long-suffering towards sinners evidenced His goodness and love to the world. He saw Christ's lament over Jerusalem (Matt. 23 and Luke 13) as expressive of divine love rather than hatred, and interpreted John 3:16–18 as evidence that God's love extended broadly to mankind.

4. On baptism and candidates for the ordinance
Mr Sayers denied that baptism conferred saving grace but emphasised its

necessity as an ordinance of Christ. He stated that repentance and faith were the only qualifications for baptism and that churches should not attempt to judge the inward reality of a candidate's experience, since this lay with God. He lamented delays in baptism among Baptist churches and warned that objections to baptism often came from Satan to hinder obedience.

Bierton Church Unable to Cope

Having read Mr Sayers' letter, I concluded that he did not agree with the Gospel Standard Articles. I asked him directly whether he had subscribed to those articles upon joining the Watford church, which is listed as a Gospel Standard cause. He told me he had never been asked to do so. I found this surprising, given his preaching engagements among Gospel Standard churches.

What was I to do? If our church was unable to resolve issues such as Particular Redemption, disorderly members, and the use of a 'Holy Table,' how could we now handle this weightier doctrinal concern?

I recognised that these matters—particularly duty faith and duty repentance—needed to be judged in the fear of God. But it was plain to me that the Bierton church was in no state to do so. I had already encountered opposition on this issue at Eaton Bray, a Gospel Standard-listed church, where I was criticised after preaching from Acts 17 and defending Article 26 of the Gospel Standard Articles. I was reproved by Mr Godly, who is now a minister in that same cause.

Prior to our church joining the Gospel Standard denomination, I had written to the Gospel Standard Committee about these very concerns and received a satisfactory reply. These letters are included in the supplement under the title:

Letter to the Gospel Standard Committee

Additionally, I wrote to Mr Peter Howe, former minister of Ivanhoe Particular Baptist Church. That correspondence, included in the supplement (pages 33–40), further shows how some members of our church remained unclear about these doctrinal issues. And it was clear that the church, as a whole, remained in no better position to address them properly.

The Matter Brought Before the Church

It became evident that this issue with Mr Sayers would need to be brought before the church. But how, and when? We were already embroiled in several unresolved matters. Nevertheless, I raised it at our church meeting in February 1984 (see page 86).

In summary, the question of Mr Sayers' disagreement with Gospel Standard doctrine was a serious concern. It revealed how ill-equipped we were to maintain a sound and consistent doctrinal foundation within our own membership and among those we engaged to preach. This added further grief to my soul and confirmed my growing conviction that deeper reformation was needed.

CHAPTER 13: Leprosy Discovered

This chapter records how communion was restored in the church, but it also led to a far more serious problem—one that remains unresolved to this day. That problem centres on the distinction between the Law of Moses as a rule of life for the believer, and the Gospel of Christ. Regrettably, this vital matter is now buried under doctrinal debris, yet I believe it will one day shine forth again when the Lord fulfils His word, as spoken in Acts 15:16:

"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up."

Restoration of the Communion

Following our church meeting in February, my conscience was clear, and I felt liberty to conduct the communion service with the Bierton church in March. I preached that day from Acts 15:16. Though Mrs Evered was absent, we partook of the Lord's Table that evening, with myself presiding.

Leprosy Cannot Be Cured

At the next church meeting, it became clear that the more one probed into the roots of our disorder, the more serious the situation appeared. To those who lightly dismiss the question of whether the Law of Moses or the Gospel is our rule of life, I say this is no small matter. It was, in fact, the very heart of the issue: Mrs Evered stood under Moses; I stood under Christ.

Church Meeting: A Disease Revealed

Date: 21st April 1984, 2:30 p.m.Members Present: Miss B. Ellis, Mrs C. Gurney, Miss G. Ellis, Mrs Evered, and myself, David Clarke.Chairman: Mr Crane of Lakenheath

The meeting opened with the singing of a hymn, followed by a reading from Galatians 5:5 and prayer. Mr Crane commented on the scripture before the minutes of the previous meeting were read, approved, and adopted.

Three issues were raised:

Mrs Gurney questioned why Mr King was not present.

Mrs Evered requested the contents of a letter I had sent to Mr King be disclosed.

Mrs Evered also requested that I express my beliefs on baptism, sin, and the commandments, as she felt this affected her relationship with the church and the ordinance of communion.

Mr Crane proposed that these issues be dealt with in due course. He noted that Mr King, while free to preach elsewhere, did not feel free to preach at Bierton, likely due to being scrutinised. Miss G. Ellis asked that it be made clear that my letter to Mr King was private and not from the church. Mr Crane confirmed this.

I offered to read the letter to the church, especially as Mr King had already shared parts of it publicly. Mr Crane declined, believing it would not help matters.

I then raised a concern about engaging ministers to preach at Bierton. Mr Crane stated that the church, established in 1831, had its own Free Grace Articles of Faith, and that all invited ministers must agree with the doctrines in the trust deed. Now that we were associated with the Gospel Standard, many of our regular ministers might not align with its Articles. Mr Crane felt it would be dishonest to invite such men only to later reject them.

He also noted that the church should resolve two difficulties regarding the

Sunday School. One involved a hymn (No. 169) being taught to the children:

"Show me the scene in the garden of bitter pain; Show me the cross where my Saviour for me was slain…"

I objected, stating it was wrong to teach children to claim Christ had died for them before they exhibited saving faith. Mr Crane agreed that many hymns in that book were unsuitable.

Baptism, Sin, and the Commandments

In response to Mrs Evered's queries, Mr Crane affirmed the church's doctrinal position as expressed in the Articles. She then asked him to read from Luke 18 and Mark 10, where the Lord tells a rich young ruler to keep the commandments.

After Mr Crane commented on these passages, I requested to offer my answer.

My Answer on Baptism:

Only those regenerated by the Holy Spirit, born again unto God, should be baptised upon a credible profession of faith. Baptism confers no grace, removes no sin—it merely symbolises our union with Christ in His death and resurrection. The believer is buried with Him and raised to walk in newness of life, under the rule of the Gospel—not the Law of Moses.

My Answer on Sin:

Believers are still afflicted with sin in thought, word, and deed. The sins of the mind alone are damning. Sin existed before Sinai; every commandment (except Sabbath observance) appears in Genesis. Even the Sabbath was broken shortly after its institution (Exodus 16:27).

My Answer on the Law of Moses:

The Mosaic Law was a covenant given to Israel, not the Church. The apostles gave no such law to Gentiles (Acts 15:5, 15:19–21). The believer's rule of life is the Gospel, not the Ten Commandments. This is plainly taught in Article 16 of the Gospel Standard Articles.

For more on this subject, see the Appendices:

Appendix 1: The Law and Gospel – F. L. Gosden

Appendix 2: The Law and Gospel – J. C. Philpot

Appendix 3: The Christian's Relationship to Mosaic Law

Appendix 4: The Sabbath – Gilbert Beebe

Appendix 5: John Calvin on the Fourth Commandment and remarks by William Tyndale and John Frith

I also published my own reflections in Reflections on the Sabbath and recommended Dr John Prideaux's The Doctrine of the Sabbath.

Conclusion: Reaction to the Church Meeting

It became painfully evident that unless those advocating Moses as the rule of life were silenced, the entire household would be subverted. But how could I begin? These legal views were not confined to Mrs Evered—they had infiltrated many Gospel Standard and Strict Baptist churches.

I could not remain among those who could not walk with me in the liberty of the Gospel. That liberty in Christ is dearer than chapel buildings, friends, family—yea, the whole world. I could see no other course: I must leave this church.

Leprosy, indeed, cannot be cured—except by the Lord.

Chairman: Mr. Paul Crane (Lakenheath)

The meeting was opened with the singing of a hymn, followed by the reading of Galatians 5:5 and prayer.

After brief comments on the Scripture reading, the minutes of the previous meeting were read, approved, and adopted.

Three matters were raised:

Mrs. Gurney inquired why Mr. King was still not present.

Mrs. Evered requested the church be informed of the contents of a private letter sent by Mr. Clarke to Mr. King.

She also asked Mr. Clarke to publicly clarify his position on baptism, sin, and the commandments, since it bore directly on her understanding of communion.

Mr. Crane stated that these matters would be addressed in due course.

The Matter of Mr. King

Mr. Crane explained that Mr. King remained absent because of unresolved hurt, particularly regarding the contents of Mr. Clarke's letter. Though Mr. King continued preaching elsewhere, he did not feel able to preach at Bierton under current circumstances.

Mrs. Gurney, who had also suffered emotionally from the church's troubles, questioned why Mr. King was seemingly excused while others endured hardship. Miss G. Ellis wanted to ensure that Mr. King did not view Mr. Clarke's letter as having come from the church. Mr. Crane confirmed it was a private letter, and therefore the matter should remain between them.

Mr. Clarke offered to read the letter, especially since Mr. King had already read portions of it publicly. However, Mr. Crane felt this would not resolve the conflict and declined the offer.

Preaching and the Gospel Standard Articles

Mr. Clarke then raised a point regarding the suitability of ministers engaged to preach at Bierton. Mr. Crane reminded the church that:

The Bierton cause was founded in 1831 and had its own Free Grace Articles of Faith, stated in the Trust Deed.

The church had now also affiliated with the Gospel Standard, whose Articles of Religion were stricter.

Some of the regular visiting ministers did not adhere to the Gospel Standard doctrines.

Mr. Crane believed it would be morally wrong to continue inviting such ministers now, only to later exclude them. He urged that going forward, ministers be drawn from Gospel Standard churches where possible.

Miss G. Ellis remarked that Mr. Hope had previously said we could continue inviting our existing ministers. Mr. Crane replied that Mr. Hope likely didn't realise how many of our ministers diverged from Gospel Standard teachings.

Sunday School Concerns

Mr. Crane then turned to the issue of hymns used in Sunday School, particularly Hymn 169:

> "Show me the scene in the garden, of bitter pain;
> Show me the cross where my Saviour, for me was slain—
> Sad one for bright ones, so that they be
> Stories of Jesus, tell them to me."

Mr. Clarke objected strongly to putting such words into the mouths of children, asserting that we cannot claim Christ died for any individual until that soul is clearly called by grace. Mr. Crane acknowledged that this hymn, and others in the Sunday School Baptist Mission Hymn Book, were in conflict with the church's stated doctrines. No action, however, was taken at that time.

Discussion on Baptism, Sin, and the Commandments

Mrs. Evered pressed Mr. Clarke to declare his position on these issues. Mr. Crane first explained the church's position as set out in the Articles of Faith, but then Mr. Clarke requested to speak.

Mr. Clarke's Response

On Baptism:

Only those who are truly born again and can give a credible profession of saving faith should be baptised. Baptism confers no saving grace, nor does it wash away sin. It is a symbol—a sign of union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It represents the old man crucified, and the believer raised with Christ to walk in newness of life.

On Sin:

The believer remains plagued with sin in this present life. Even sinful

thoughts, left unchecked, are enough to damn a man for eternity. Sin pervades everything we do—thought, word, and deed. This has been true from the days before the Law was given at Sinai, as shown in the Book of Genesis. The command to keep the Sabbath, however, was only introduced to Israel under Moses (Exodus 16:27), and was broken almost immediately.

On the Law of Moses:

The Law was given to Israel as part of a legal covenant. The apostles never taught that Gentile believers were under that Law. Ephesians 2:12 says the Gentiles were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." In Acts 15, when the question arose about imposing the Law of Moses on Gentile converts, the apostles gave no such commandment.

I referred the church to Article 16 of the Gospel Standard Articles, which states that the believer's rule of life is the Gospel, not the Ten Commandments, which Mrs. Evered was advocating.

Supplementary Readings and Publications

To support my views, I cited the following works (listed in the Appendices):

The Law and Gospel by F. L. Gosden

The Law and Gospel by J. C. Philpot

The Christian's Relationship to Mosaic Law

The Sabbath by Gilbert Beebe

John Calvin on the Fourth Commandment

Writings of William Tyndale and John Frith (both martyrs)

I later expanded my thoughts in my publication Reflections on the Sabbath, along with The Doctrine of the Sabbath by Dr. John Prideaux.

Conclusion and Personal Resolution

This meeting only confirmed what I already feared: unless the mouths of those promoting Moses as our rule of life are stopped, the church will be overthrown.

I realised this spirit—a legal spirit—was not unique to Mrs. Evered. It was widespread across Gospel Standard and Strict Baptist churches. I could not, in conscience, remain in fellowship with those who walked contrary to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our liberty in Christ is far more precious than buildings, friends, or traditions. I saw no other path but to separate. For just as leprosy in Israel could only be cleansed by the hand of God, so too must He alone purge His Church.

CHAPTER 14: Announcement Of Resignation

Separation from the Bierton Church

In the first week of June 1984, I announced my resignation from both office and membership at Bierton Chapel. Only a few were present to hear it—Mrs. Gurney, Miss B. Ellis, and Miss G. Ellis—for by that time Mrs. Evered no longer attended any meetings at which I preached or led prayer.

Mr. Crane's Special Visit

Following my announcement, Mr. Crane made a special visit to speak with me. His counsel was heartfelt and well-meant: he urged me to remain, reasoning that I would likely encounter the same, if not worse, troubles in other churches or denominations. His caution was not without merit.

Persuaded to Reconsider

His words gave me pause. Thinking perhaps he was right, I attended the next weeknight prayer meeting, hoping to share my concerns openly. I asked Mr. King if he would stay behind afterwards to hear me out. However, Mrs. Evered was again absent, and Mr. King declined to remain.

Address to the Church – 12th June 1984, 8:15 p.m.

I gave the following address, recording it on cassette, for I believed the issues at hand had long-term consequences—not only for Bierton, but for others concerned with the defence of truth in our generation.
Opening Prayer:

> *"Our dear Lord God,*
> *Thou hast promised to hear when Thy people call upon Thee; and we do call in Jesus' name. Please come to our aid, for His sake we ask. Amen."*

Statement:

"What I have to say this evening is serious. I believe the consequences will be significant. You may find yourselves disagreeing with me entirely. If so—if you truly believe you can no longer walk with me—I urge you to accept my resignation here and now, and grant me leave to go quietly.

But whether you agree or not, my prayer is that what follows will ultimately serve the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ."

I admitted that my approach might seem unorthodox. But I reminded the assembly that the Lord is not bound by the traditions and etiquette of men. We were, as I saw it, in a time of crisis—and spiritual war demands clarity, not ceremony.

I told them: "Dire straits require bold measures. We cannot continue as we are. Satan has sown discord, and truth must be restored."

Grounds for My Resignation

I reminded them of my announcement in May/June, and stated the two key areas requiring immediate attention:

1. Resignation as Secretary

This was urgent, as ministers needed to be engaged for 1985, and that scheduling was already underway. I could not continue in this role in good conscience.

2. Resignation from Membership

I could no longer maintain my spiritual integrity while remaining among those whose practice and beliefs compromised the truth of the Gospel. Though I had preached in fear of God, my silence for the sake of peace had undermined my own faith, and quenched hope that God might yet restore Bierton. My compromise had removed the foundation of faith.

Examples of Compromise

A. Female Authority over Ministerial Appointments

As Secretary, I was bound to act on the will of the church—effectively, at that time, only the women members. This, I believed, was a violation of Scripture, which forbids women exercising authority over men (1 Timothy 2:12).

Several faithful ministers had been rejected by the vote of the women—Mr. C. Lawrence, Mr. S. Scott-Pearson, Mr. Redhead, Mr. Payne, and Mr. Butler of Chelmsford—all for the sake of keeping peace, even when truth demanded otherwise.

I recounted visiting the Winslow Baptist Chapel, where I learned that they had a woman pastor and were holding a united service with Anglicans and Roman Catholics. After preaching earnestly against such compromise, I wrote to their deacon, Mr. Paul Duffett, expressing my shock. Yet I was then convicted: How could I rebuke another church when we at Bierton were guilty of similar errors—namely, that the women ruled?

B. General Redemption Hymns Taught to Children

I had protested the use of Hymn 169, which wrongly told children that Jesus died for them each one. Yet the women in the church disagreed, dismissing my concerns as trivial. I stood alone.

C. Superstition Regarding Chapel and Table

I taught openly that neither the chapel building nor the communion table was sacred in itself. Yet I faced resistance. The idea that these physical things held spiritual reverence was unscriptural and, I believed, idolatrous. Until these matters were set in order, how could I expect the Lord to dwell among us?

I recalled hearing visiting ministers refer to the building as "the House of God." I thought they ought to be made aware of Mrs. Evered's views, for I believed they would be more careful with their language if they understood the superstitions present in the church.

The Call of Abraham

I concluded that I must, like Abraham, obey God rather than man. Though I did not know where I would go, I had a family to teach, and I could not remain in a compromised, spiritually stifled situation.

As long as the church's direction conflicted with my conscience, I was bound. I could not walk by faith, nor could I claim to be faithful to the Gospel.

The Cessation of Truth

By this, I mean that truth no longer holds prime importance—except when it happens to support the traditions and church order people have grown used to, regardless of whether that order is truly founded on the Word of God.

Let me give an example.

When I speak of a Strict Baptist chapel, particularly those under the Gospel Standard banner, a familiar image comes to mind:

A certain style of chapel building. A particular form of worship—an opening hymn, followed by a reading of Scripture and a lengthy prayer (perhaps twenty minutes), then the notices. A second hymn, the sermon, and finally, a closing hymn and the benediction. Ladies, of course, are expected to have their heads covered.

The visiting preacher usually travels some distance and is expected to belong to a like-minded Strict Baptist fellowship. His ministry will be acceptable provided he dresses in the usual dark suit and tie, speaks in familiar terms—using phrases like "free grace" and rejecting "free will"—and maintains a tone that comforts rather than disturbs the congregation. Whether he's understandable or not matters little, so long as he reassures the people that all is well, and that if they simply carry on as they are, the Lord will appear for them in due time. If he ticks those boxes, he'll likely be invited back the following year—and so the cause rolls on.

Many assume that subscribing to the Gospel Standard, attending other chapels' anniversary services, and generally following the crowd is what it means to be faithful to the cause of Christ.

Since this is the common way of things, people are easily led to believe this must be "the way" spoken of in Scripture. That the established church order is what we're to preserve and contend for. And that any deviation from it is to fall away, to stray from the truth. So, congregations gear themselves up to preserve this way of life. They promote it. It becomes habit—a culture we expect even our children to adopt. And then we baptise it all by saying that the grace of God tempers us to serve in this way, claiming this is "the way, the truth, and the life."

But when things reach this point, I say the people have become like Samson—

blinded and made to grind at the mill.

Now let me tell you why I believe truth has ceased to be truth among such people.

When I challenged the church at Bierton—a Strict and Particular Baptist, Gospel Standard cause—for allowing general redemption to be taught (whether through hymns or otherwise), the church took offence. They were not repentant. The common defence was: "What harm is there in telling the children that Jesus loves them all and died for them each one?" Others reasoned that since Scripture uses phrases like "all the world," then surely there's no wrong in using hymns that speak of redemption for all—even though we know it can't mean every individual.

I say this: when sentiment for children, or long-standing patterns of worship, override scriptural accuracy, then truth has lost its rule. If a congregation cannot see the error here, it is because they are spiritually blind in this matter.

The same is true regarding the chapel building and the Lord's Table. I maintain that truth has not been the governing principle behind people's thoughts, but rather a carnal affection for the building and a long-standing acceptance of vague and unsound expressions concerning worship and the church of Christ.

Sadly, some of our ministers are to blame for such loose talk, which Satan has used to mislead people. I must ask: do the people love the chapel more than they love the truth? I understand that buildings carry memories—but are we willing to forsake even that, for the sake of Christ? If not, then deception has taken root, and truth is no longer the driving force in our spiritual walk.

Just as the Church of Rome leans heavily upon its history, traditions, and structure—so too do some of our chapels. Rome seeks to preserve itself, to extend its reach, and will use any means to maintain its position, even if that means compromising the truth in the name of peace. But such a church has abandoned the foundation laid by Christ. Its end is spiritual death.

How then can I rest easy where such things are taking place?

I seek a city whose builder and maker is God—not a chapel, nor a people

unwilling to forsake all for Christ. That includes their building, their families, and even lifelong friends.

In all of this, we are learning by painful experience the truth of our Lord's words: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." And again: "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."

CHAPTER 15: My Conclusion

After much soul-searching and deliberation, I concluded my final address to the church by recommending that Miss Gwen Ellis should take over as Secretary, and under no circumstance should Mrs. Evered assume the role. I then commended the assembly to God and the word of His grace, "which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

A Necessary Separation

I also informed them of my intent to write to those churches where I was scheduled to preach, to spare them any embarrassment. For having now withdrawn from membership at Bierton, it would not be proper for me to continue ministering in other chapels without being in good standing within a church of like faith.

Where Does This Leave Us?

That was the question I put plainly: What now? What should we do?

In an earlier conversation with Mr. Crane, I explained my internal conflict. As Secretary, I was expected to correspond with visiting ministers to arrange appointments for the following year. But how could I do that in good conscience when our own fellowship was so divided?

I had even prepared a draft letter to send to our preachers.

Letter to Visiting Ministers (Draft)

Dear Sir,

Some of our visiting ministers frequently refer to the chapel at Bierton as

the "House of God," both in prayer and preaching. This has, understandably, led some hearers to think that the building itself is a holy sanctuary, that the communion table, the vestry, and even the furnishings are holy vessels unto God, to be revered.

As a church member and one called to preach, I have addressed this subject. I have taught that the church of the living God is the true house of God (1 Tim. 3:15). That God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24). That Jesus Christ is the true tabernacle, and that the body of believers—joined to Him through regeneration—is now His dwelling place (Rev. 21:3; John 2:19–21; 1 Cor. 3:16).

Some have resisted this truth. I respectfully ask that you bear this in mind if you ever refer to the "House of God" when preaching at Bierton.

Yours in sincere concern for the truth,
David Clarke
1984

Mr. Crane's Response

I asked Mr. Crane whether such a letter would be appropriate. He agreed with its content and saw no harm in it, though he thought some ministers might take offence, thinking themselves criticised. Nonetheless, he admitted it had caused him to reconsider his own use of such language.

No Desire to Leave—But Conscience Compels

Mr. Crane assured me that the church did not want me to leave—we were so few. And truth be told, neither did I want to go. The pain of it all was great. I had children to raise, a family to consider. To part ways would surely strain relationships in the village and amongst the Strict Baptist chapels.

Where would I go? I could not just join another church without them first judging our internal troubles. I might have to walk alone. But if solitude was the path God had appointed, then by His grace, I would take it.

Mr. King and Mrs. Evered – Out of Order

The unresolved relationship with Mr. King, and the obstinate resistance of Mrs. Evered, weighed heavily on my conscience.

Mr. King had refused to attend church meetings since May 1983, after I had written to him in private (see earlier chapter). He continued to preach elsewhere, but not at Bierton. The church, for its part, failed to understand the doctrinal issues I had raised, still asking, "Why can't you and Mr. King just get on?"

They wanted my presence, but seemingly not the doctrine I preached.

Discipline Was Needed

I believed both Mr. King and Mrs. Evered should be brought under church discipline. But the church disagreed. What was I to do? Was I the one who troubled Israel (1 Kings 18:17)? I cried to the Lord for wisdom.

Theological Error Regarding the Law

Of great concern were Mrs. Evered's views on the Law of Moses. She maintained that the Ten Commandments were the believer's rule of life and that Jesus had directed us to keep them as such. I declared this to be an error—a serious one.

The church had solemnly subscribed to the Gospel Standard Articles in 1981, and Article 16 clearly affirms that:

"The believer's rule of life is the Gospel and not the Moral Law issued upon Mount Sinai."

Letter to Mrs. Evered (1981)

In February 1981, I had written to Mrs. Evered in support of our church's union with the Gospel Standard cause, stating:

"The Gospel Standard Association is a means by which God is preserving His truth in the world, particularly regarding the believer's relationship to the Law, particular redemption, and the Gospel as a declaration—not an offer."

Support from Our Forefathers

This doctrine is not new. It is richly supported in the writings of:

J.C. Philpot (Gospel Standard 1861)

William Gadsby ("The Perfect Law of Liberty")

John Bunyan (on the Sabbath)

Dr. John Gill (on Christian worship)

William Huntington ("Forty Stripes for Satan")

Even John Calvin, in his Institutes.

If the Law of Moses is still binding as our rule of life, then we are bound to keep the seventh-day Sabbath as well—which is plainly not the case.

On Article 26 – Duty Faith and Repentance

Another grave concern: Mr. H. Sayers and Mr. Rowland—both visiting ministers—denied Article 26, which states:

"We deny duty faith and duty repentance… We reject the doctrine that man in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God."

I had preached this doctrine and was criticised for it, even by ministers within Gospel Standard churches. I drafted a clearer rendering of Article 26 to address the objections.

My Clarified Version of Article 26

We deny that it is the duty of all men to live by faith on Christ's merits. Rather, these are gifts given by the Spirit according to the Covenant of Grace. Yet we believe all men are commanded to repent of sin and believe the Gospel report (Acts 17:30; Acts 8:22; Acts 26:20). The natural man, being dead in sin, has no power to perform these duties savingly.

The Disputed Articles (31–34)

These articles address how Gospel invitations are issued, and how the exhortations of the Old Testament are not to be pressed upon unregenerate sinners in a saving sense.

This is vital, and yet hardly any ministers today understand it. Our generation needs clarity—and it is our responsibility to provide it.

The Hymns

I again pressed the case against hymns that teach general redemption, such as:

"Jesus died for me" (Hymn 169)
"God loves all the little children" (Hymn 108)

Such lines are not merely sentimental—they deny sovereign grace and mislead the young.

On Protestant Teaching and Romanism

I urged the church to hold special meetings—especially during times of national concern, such as the Pope's visit to Britain. I had suggested that Mr. G. Ferguson of the British Council of Protestant Christian Churches be invited to speak.

Instead, the church declined. "We have Roman Catholic friends," said Mr. King, "and would not want to offend them." They refused me even the use of the Sunday School room for such a meeting. I held it in my home instead.

My Final Appeal

I concluded with this question:

"Will you walk with me—or must I walk alone?"

I was not seeking to dominate or impose. I sought only that the church would return to biblical order, to Gospel purity, and to truth above tradition.

I promised to continue discharging my duties as Secretary, for as long as I remained in membership, and urged them to make a decision at the next church meeting.

Responses from Mr. King and Mrs. Evered

I gave a cassette recording of this address to both of them.

Mr. King refused to listen. "There's one above who knows all," he said.

Mrs. Evered returned the cassette with a letter, calling it "abhorrent" that church business should be recorded. She quoted Jeremiah 6:16, Colossians 2:21, and Romans 12:2—but entirely missed the point.

My wife found it all rather absurd, though I groaned inwardly. It was clear to me: Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

The handwriting was on the wall:
וְיסרפו ,לקת ,אנמ, אנמ
"Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" (Daniel 5:25).

CHAPTER 16: Mr Crane's Response

Upon receiving the tape recording of my address at the Bierton Chapel, Mr Crane wasted no time in replying by letter. His words, penned with urgency and evident concern, read as follows:

Letter from Mr Crane

Dear David,

You certainly spoke at length. We are living in times riddled with deception. Ever since our Lord Jesus walked this earth, true and vital religion has not been restricted to one nation alone. Yet England, I believe, has been wonderfully privileged. Was it not once said, "Play the man, Ridley, for we shall this day light such a candle in England as I trust shall never be put out"? One dare not be complacent as we witness our Protestant heritage eroded by the cunning of men. A voice is needed to sound the alarm.

But as it is written, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Indeed, we see signs of decline: apostasy, the love of many waxing cold, a spiritual wilderness. If the Lord do not revive His work in the midst of the years, where shall we be? Time and again the end seemed nigh—Adam's fall, the Flood, wars and rumours of wars. Yet God in His longsuffering has stayed His hand.

Rome, with its ancient errors, still draws many through man's natural inclination toward religion. Though fallen, she remains religious and astonishingly enduring. All that is not born of God is sin—even religious sin. Denominational traditions, Strict Baptist or otherwise, if not of God, are sin. It is possible to have a false Christ—an idol—not known in the power of

His resurrection.

Only the Holy Ghost enlightens, and He alone leads us to Christ, the new and living way—the perfect law of liberty. We desperately need a prophetic voice in this land, like unto Luther or Wycliffe. Another reformation isn't necessary; rather, a move of the Spirit of God across all levels—kings, queens, and commoners alike.

It's frustrating, I know. The media, the systems, all seem opposed to truth. Yet God can reveal truth to a man in an instant, as He did to Saul of Tarsus. Even the Church of England, while not wholly Romeward, has little to say on the vital doctrines of grace. Too much free will, too little free grace.

Truth and error always stand opposed—think of Dathan and Abiram and the strange fire (if memory serves). God has always preserved a remnant in Israel, surrounded by enemies. Sometimes they thrive, other times they are nearly extinguished, but then revived again. Judges were raised up to deliver them. We must view history through spiritual eyes.

Though we may not see outward persecution, we fear a barren spiritual land. We're not called to fight carnally, but lethargy could lose all. God may forsake us, both in small congregations and nationally, if we continue to slumber. Perhaps He will raise a voice in our midst to keep the flame alive.

Yes, we believe in election and the sovereignty of God. But Hezekiah prayed and God added fifteen years to his life (Isaiah 38:5). God had said he would die, but not when. It was a warning, he heeded it, and the Lord had mercy. We must bring our impossibilities before the Lord and labour in prayer for His miraculous intervention.

David, if the Lord has called you to preach and given you clarity of doctrine and purpose, then it's because there is a need. Don't be disheartened if you meet resistance or criticism. Light is given not for places already lit, but for those in darkness. It matters not that some of these churches are well established—many still err.

Preach the truth with a heart to help, not to rebuke. Don't assume people know better; many don't. "Learn of me," saith the Lord (Matthew 11:29). We are all learners—even you.

Preach with faithfulness, feeling, tenderness, and love. Don't raise your voice in anger; reason with them, as Paul did. Remember, to some the gospel will be life unto life, to others death (2 Corinthians 2:16). Leave the outcome with God. If, like the Jews, they reject you, shake the dust off your feet and move on.

Not all ministers have the same calling—some comfort, some warn. Not all are eloquent. We ought to strive for clarity and truth above all. If ministers cannot be found, then let there be reading services at Bierton. I agree with your doctrinal views. Clear teaching is needed, but doctrine alone, without the flesh of experience, is dry bones.

The Gospel Standard Articles are merely expressions of your connection to that denomination. The Bierton Articles are nearly identical in spirit. The so-called "added articles" are cautionary, not foundational. While helpful in an age of schism, they cannot bind a man truly taught of God. The duty faith article is clear enough in my view; I see no need to alter it. What God teaches in the heart becomes one's true confession.

Invite men to Bierton who align with these truths. You are a Strict Baptist Church—you believe in particular redemption—so invite like-minded preachers. Anything else compromises your stand. Strict communion speaks to a distinct people, baptised according to scripture. Men who disagree with that shouldn't be administering ordinances.

Would you preach weekly at Bierton? Is that the Lord's will? You can't force it. If He wills it, He will make it happen in due time. "Though it tarry, wait for it" (Habakkuk 2:3).

On Church Discipline:

Those who neglect the ordinances should fall under church censure. However, you've taken several first Sundays, not out of self-interest, but necessity. The ordinance could be observed on another Lord's Day. There is strife between you and some members. If you've wounded them with sharp words, wait upon the Lord for healing.

Some members may be walking in dim light—do not rebuke them for what they cannot yet see. Distribute the Bierton Articles of Faith among members and empower the secretary to invite preachers on any Lord's Day. Those who

refuse to attend worship for petty reasons should be censured.

Each preacher invited should receive a copy of the Bierton Articles.

As for the Church of England's articles on relics—perhaps useful in the book. Lectures can stimulate the mind, but they don't always feed the soul. I'm not opposed to them, but the main aim of gathering is to hear of Jesus. "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" (Song of Solomon 3:3). Everything else is a sideshow.

This letter is but a scribbled note. I may have missed your key points. Write again if needed.

Regarding the Sunday School hymnal—you do need a new one. Have you tried the Young People's Hymnal? We need truth in the schoolroom as much as in the chapel. A thin wedge becomes a thick one soon enough.

Yours in Christ,
Paul Crane

My Response

I realised I had but one course of action if I were to maintain a consistent and honest witness against the errors I had encountered at Bierton and elsewhere. I phoned Mr Crane to explain my position and informed him I would be writing immediately.

From Mr Crane's earlier letter, it was clear that the matters of duty faith and duty repentance were not considered contentious at Bierton or in the wider circles. This stood in stark contrast to my own conviction. I had found it necessary to teach the truth on these subjects from first principles, setting out a clear and definitive explanation in order to remove the ambiguity that surrounded Articles 26 and 31 of the Gospel Standard Articles of Religion.

To my mind, the original writer of these articles needed an editor—because as they stood, I did not believe they expressed what was actually intended. And even since they were revised, I have yet to find anyone who has offered a sound or reasonable commentary on the subject.

Furthermore, I did not consider lectures on the Reformation to be mere distractions from the gospel, though I was unwilling to make an issue of this

at the time. We had quite enough to contend with already.

Letter of Resignation

Sent to Mr Paul Crane, 26th June 1984

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your response and for the prompt attention given to my address at Bierton Chapel, delivered on the first Wednesday of June. I gave a copy of the recorded message to Mr King, but he refused to listen to it or accept a letter from me.

Mrs Evered also received a copy, but she likewise declined to hear what I had to say to the church. Enclosed is her letter, dated 19th June, for your reference.

Finding both consolation and instruction in the scriptures—"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth" (2 Timothy 2:20–21) and "God setteth the solitary in families" (Psalm 68:6)—I am compelled to withdraw from membership of the Bierton church. My conscience will not permit me to remain.

I have spoken enough on the matter of disorder among us; there is little gain in repeating it. I am persuaded it is no longer right for either myself or my family to remain within your number. I see no prospect of spiritual prosperity at Bierton unless serious attention is given to the matters previously raised.

I will forward a written transcript of what is recorded on the cassette.

By withdrawing myself from the church, I naturally forfeit the privileges of membership. Accordingly, I shall write to the churches where I am scheduled to preach, asking their leave to withdraw from those engagements, in order to avoid any discomfort or embarrassment.

To those who have known me as a friend, I hope this does not bring any breach of personal affection. This step simply means I am no longer bound to you by church membership and am now free to follow the path I must take. Nonetheless, you remain bound by the rules of your society to do what you must.

I must walk according to the Word of God and engage in spiritual warfare using the weapons the Lord has given. Like David, I cannot go forth with Saul's armour—I have not proved it. But in the name of the Lord God of Israel, I will fight the fight of faith. I believe that by this step of faith, and others that follow, the Lord will appear both for my good and for the good of the wider church of Jesus Christ.

Yours sincerely,
David Clarke

Mr Crane's Response

Mr Crane phoned shortly after receiving my letter and asked whether I was fully persuaded in my own mind. He said he had hoped he could have simply discarded the letter and ignored it. I explained that he could not do so—that he must take it seriously and act accordingly.

I reminded him that I had not engaged any ministers to preach at Bierton for the coming year. That particular week was the customary time to issue invitations for the following year's preaching calendar (1985). Mr Crane responded by saying that such arrangements were not a major concern. If the Lord intended the church to have ministers for 1985, He would ensure they were found—even if not until December.

And so it was that I officially seceded from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, a fellowship founded in 1831 and enrolled as a Gospel Standard cause in 1981. My date of secession: 26th June 1984.

CHAPTER 17: I Seek a City

(Hebrews 11:10)

If anything I write here brings comfort or direction to the scattered children of God, may it be used to draw them unto our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.
My Hopes and Desires

Please overlook what may not be spiritual in these words. And if any of the Lord's people feel they might offer help or fellowship in our journey, do feel free to get in touch.

"I seek a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

I long for a people of like mind—for mutual help, loving reproof, correction unto righteousness, and consolation in Christ Jesus our Lord.

"The Lord send thee help from the sanctuary" (Psalm 20:2).

Grace and peace be unto you from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ,
who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world,
according to the will of God and our Father:

To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
(Galatians 1:3–5)

Conclusion to the Whole Matter

My secession from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church was not a departure from the Church of Christ, nor from other congregations. Bierton was a Gospel Standard cause, and under the rules of membership, I cannot simply "resign." Only the church has the authority to issue an honourable or dishonourable discharge. They could have removed me, Mrs Clarke, or Mr King from membership—but they did not. And so, by rule 22 of our own church order, we technically remain members.

Mr Crane hoped I would reconsider and return to full communion, as I had not been found faulty in doctrine, conduct, or practice.

While at Bierton, I upheld and contended earnestly for the truths of sovereign grace, as set forth in our Articles of Religion (dating back to 1831, signed by Mr Warburton), and also in the Gospel Standard Articles. It was not I who departed from our heritage, but rather the remaining members of the church. True reconciliation can only come through repentance and a return to the Lord in accordance with those great truths we once confessed together.

I write this not only for those of my own generation but also for the one to

come. Unless we remain faithful to the Word of God, and build upon the foundation that Christ has laid, the house we labour to raise will surely fall.

"But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth… and the ruin of that house was great."
(Luke 6:49)

If I can be of help to anyone in these matters, please feel free to contact me.

David Clarke

I Preach at Home

After leaving the Bierton Church, I found it very hard to adjust. I considered joining another church, but the question remained—where? In the meantime, we began meeting at home, where I preached on Sunday mornings to my family and a few close friends. I felt as though I'd been under siege, and our home became a place of refuge.

I was now preaching in the very same room where Gordon Ferguson had once preached in 1982, when we had gathered to consider the times and the imminent visit of the Pope of Rome to the UK.

Yet I still believed we should belong to a local church. The problem was, where could we go? I had seen first-hand the failings of the Gospel Standard system as it had played out at Bierton. Though the church's lips were full of "gospel language," it had in truth fallen from grace. Their own Articles declared that the gospel—not the Law of Moses—was the believer's rule of life, but in practice, tradition and legalism had taken over.

Moreover, I found the added articles of the Gospel Standard too shaky and unclear to adopt as a credible confession of faith. So there we were—unchurched. Yet I believed we could not remain that way.

I sought the Lord in prayer. I felt strongly that we must be willing to move house, even change work, in order to be in a church where the Lord would have us be.

I Experience Anxiety

After all the conflict at Bierton and the deep soul-searching that followed,

I found myself growing fearful and weak. I began to dread going out to preach. Before long, I was unable to fulfil the preaching engagements I had scheduled.

I did not feel it was right to bring other churches into the difficulties I had with Bierton. The whole situation was just too heavy. The pressure was overwhelming, and I felt as though I were on the verge of a breakdown. I didn't know how to cope.

A Very Serious Matter Arises

Around this time, a serious situation arose involving my family and others. It required the intervention of the police. Looking back, I now see that if we had been part of a functioning, biblically ordered church, the matter could have been dealt with in a far better manner.

A Strict Communion church would have provided safeguards, wisdom, and accountability. I am prepared to discuss this matter privately if it would be of help, but it is of such a serious nature that it must be handled with utmost care.

The Value of Strict Communion

This very incident caused me to see the true value of Strict Communion. When the civil law fails or is unable to act, the church ought to stand firm, exercising godly judgment and spiritual care.

A City Whose Builder and Maker Is God

It was out of these experiences that I felt compelled to write The Bierton Crisis. I distributed it to all who had been involved. I believed I was not only called to preach but also set for the defence and confirmation of the gospel.

I learned afresh the truth of Paul's words:

> "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." (Philippians 1:12)

Help from Pastor David Oldham

After The Bierton Crisis was published, Mr David Oldham, pastor of Stamford and Evington Strict and Particular Baptist Churches, kindly invited

me to spend a day with him in Leicester. We were able to talk through many of the issues I had written about.

I was deeply grateful for this fellowship. At that time, I felt very much alone.

Our History

The following account was written in response to a query raised by Mr D. Crowther, deacon of the church meeting at Attleborough. I had been invited to preach there shortly after my secession from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church.

In my correspondence with Mr Crowther, I explained that I was no longer a member of any church. I felt it necessary to make this clear, as my presence at Attleborough might cause some embarrassment or unease between the churches. I told him that if the church at Attleborough still wished me to preach, I would suggest they consult Mr Crane, who was then the overseer of the Bierton cause, and ask him for the reasons behind my secession. If, after doing so, they were satisfied that I had not acted out of order as a Christian and remained faithful in my stand for truth, then I would feel free in conscience to preach the gospel among them.

By "free in conscience," I mean that the church at Attleborough would be fully aware of my position and reasons for leaving Bierton and would have judged me to be upright in the matter. That, in my view, would clear the way for honest and untroubled ministry among them.

Following this is a letter addressed to Mr Royce of Luton, who wrote to me enquiring about Article 32 of the Gospel Standard Articles of Religion. I include that letter here because it reflects the ongoing difficulties and unrest that have arisen within—and outside—the denomination over this particular article. My reply outlines my doctrinal understanding on that point, and I trust it may be helpful to others who find themselves in similar difficulty.

"Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion."
(Isaiah 52:8)

I pray the Lord hasten that day.

Letter to Mr D. Crowther, Attleborough

Dear Mr Crowther,
I am thankful for the opportunity to speak for myself concerning my secession from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church. I also understand that Mr Crane has spoken to you and relayed his understanding of the matters I raised. However, it appears there may have been some misunderstanding on his part, particularly regarding my references to the Gospel Standard Articles and Bierton's application to become a Gospel Standard cause.

For this reason, I am forwarding a copy of this letter to Mr Crane as well, since I do not know precisely what he has said to you. I hope this written explanation will help to clarify matters that remain unresolved at Bierton.

I was first introduced to the Gospel Standard denomination in 1973–74 through the Bierton Church. At that time, Mr Hill, Minister of the Gospel at Ebenezer Chapel in Luton, was closely involved. Until then, I had not known of any church that faithfully upheld the doctrines of sovereign grace, which I had come to believe were the clear teaching of the Word of God and central to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I had been called by grace and converted from a life of crime, drug abuse, and immorality in 1970. With no church upbringing or background, my knowledge of the Lord Jesus and of gospel truth came largely through reading the scriptures, seeking God in prayer, and by reading spiritual books. In the Lord's providence, a friend loaned me William Huntington's "The Kingdom of God Taken by Prayer", and another gave me "The Mercies of a Covenant God" by John Kershaw. These were of great help to me.

At the time, I was attending a Pentecostal church in Aylesbury and had visited a wide variety of churches, none of which taught the doctrines of sovereign grace or absolute predestination. I eventually left the Pentecostal church because of its Arminian doctrines and began attending the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church instead.

Until that point, I had never met anyone who truly believed and taught the doctrines of free and sovereign grace. The Bierton church became very precious to me, and I was received into membership there in 1976.

CHAPTER 18 :Bierton Articles Of Religion Of 1831.

These are the articles I solemnly subscribed to when I joined the church at Bierton, on the 8th of January 1976, and which I strove to maintain.
These article I transcribed from the original trust deed held by Miss Bertha Ellis. The son of John Warburton from Trowbridge signed the document.

The Articles Are As Follows:

And whereas certain persons meet together and with the blessing of God will continue to meet together for the purpose of divine worship at a chapel or place of worship adjoining the said hereditament and called the Bierton Baptist Chapel and the said persons call them selves "The Society of Particular Baptists" and such persons are herein after meant and referred to by the expression of "The Church" and the said persons believe and pledge themselves to the promulgation and support of the tenets or articles of faith herein after set forth, that is to say,

1 They believe that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are given by inspiration of God and are the only rule of faith and practice and that these scriptures reveal the one true and only God who is self-existent, infinite and eternal.

2 That there are three self existent co-eternal persons in the Godhead namely the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost and these three are one God and that the Lord Jesus Christ is very God and very man in one glorious complex person.
3 That Before the world began God did elect a certain number of the human race unto everlasting life and salvation whom He did predestine to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ of his own free grace and according to the good pleasure of His will.

4 That God created Adam upright and all his posterity fell in him, he being the federal head and representative of all mankind.

5 That the Lord Jesus Christ in the fullness of time became incarnate and that he really suffered and died as the substitute for the elect of God only and in their stead whereby he made all the satisfaction for their sins which the law and justice of God could require as well as made a way for the bestowments of all those blessings which are needful for them for time and eternity.

6 That the eternal redemption which Christ hath obtained by the shedding of his blood is special and particular that it is only and intentionally designed for the elect of God who only can share its spiritual blessings.

7 That the justification of Gods elect is only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them and received by faith without consideration of any works of righteousness done by them and that the full and free pardon of all there sins and transgressions is only through the full free pardon of all their sins and transgressions is only through the blood of Christ according to the riches of Gods grace.

8 That regeneration, conversion, sanctification and faith are the work of the Almighty efficacious and invincible grace of God the Holy Ghost.

9 That all those chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son and sanctified by the Spirit shall certainly and finally persevere unto eternal life.

10 That there is a resurrection of the dead both of the just and the unjust and that Christ will come a second time to judge the quick and the dead when he will consign the wicked to everlasting punishment and introduce His own people into his kingdom and Glory where they shall be for ever with Him.

11 That baptism of believers by immersion and the Lords Supper are ordinances of Christ to be continued until His coming again and that the former is absolutely requisite to the latter, that is to say that only those are to be admitted as members of the church and participate in its privileges including the ordinance of the Lords supper who upon profession of their faith have been baptised namely immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And that no person who has not been baptised as afro said shall on any account be permitted to sit down or commune at the Lords table within the said school room and whereas for the purpose of giving effect to the objects and intentions of the parties hereto and of the said church it has been agreed that the said Hereditament's shall be conveyed to the trustees upon the trust and for the purpose hereinafter contained and these present have been approved by the members of the said Church meeting called for that purpose and held at the said chapel on or before the date

Hereof

The indenture further witnesseth that in further pursuance and consideration

of the premises they the trustees do hereby severally covenant and agree amongst themselves and with each other and with the church that they the trustees their successors and assigns shall and henceforth stand and be possessed of the hereditament And premises hereinbefore conveyed unto them upon trust to dedicate and devote and preserve the same for the purpose of holy and divine worship according to the tenets or articles of faith herein set forth.

That the election of any future pastor of the said church and the removal of any pastor shall be decided by the vote of two thirds of the church assembled at a regularly convened church meeting together with the object for which it is convened having been publicly announce for four successive Lords days. Any member eligible to vote has to have been four times to the Lords table in six months unless prevented by illness etc.

No minister shall be elected to the pastoral office or continue therein but such as holds to the doctrines and communion aforesaid nor shall it be lawful for the said church to receive into fellowship any such persons as members but such as have been baptised that is by immersed in water upon confession of their faith in Christ and are able to give some satisfactory account of a work of grace having passed upon their souls in being called out of darkness into Gods marvellous light, nor shall it be lawful for the said church to admit to her communion (in which term is include the ordinance of the Lords supper) any person who has not been baptised by immersion in water on a profession of faith in the name of Jesus.

CHAPTER 19 :Bierton a Gospel Standard Cause

How the Church Functioned

It was only after I had joined the church, and been appointed Secretary, that I gained access to the minutes of the church meetings. It was then I began to understand the actual responsibilities held by Mr Hill and the other church officers.

I discovered that Mr Hill had only accepted the role of chairman on the 8th of January 1976, and that his first time chairing a meeting was the very day I was received into membership. It also became clear he had only been asked to chair that particular meeting to advise the church regarding the election of new trustees. Mr King agreed at that meeting to serve as secretary, a role previously undertaken by Mrs Evered.

At that same meeting, the church requested Mr Hill to chair meetings on alternate occasions — to which he agreed. So, it was evident that Mr Hill had not been given oversight of the church, but was simply asked to chair certain meetings.

At this point, the Bierton cause was not a listed Gospel Standard church.

The First Move to Become a Gospel Standard Cause

The church at Bierton eventually voted to become a Gospel Standard cause on the 16th of January 1981. I was not present at that meeting, and the news came as a surprise to me — for several reasons. I ask you to bear with me, for the sequence of events is important.

The first mention of applying to join the Gospel Standard denomination was brought up by Mrs Evered during the church meeting held on 7th July 1978. Here is a transcript from the minutes of that meeting:

"Mrs Evered proposed that the church should make application to join the Gospel Standard churches. Mr Hill gave detailed information about the procedure. He explained that if the church wished to consider this further, the matter could be brought forward again at the next meeting. He also mentioned that we could change over to Gadsby's Hymn Book, since the Denham collection had worn out and was out of print. Gadsby's Hymns were used in other Gospel Standard causes."

At the next meeting, held on 1st November 1978 — which I chaired — Mr King resigned as secretary. At the time, I was not in a position to take up the role myself due to personal and domestic circumstances. I had just finished my studies at Teacher Training College and was moving between Wolverhampton and Leicester. From there, I had taken up my first lecturing post at Luton College of Higher Education, and bought a house in Linslade — where Mr Collier was the pastor of the Strict Baptist Church.

I had thought this move might benefit my wife, especially as Bierton had no settled pastor, and consequently my attendance at chapel had been irregular that year.

It was suggested that Mrs Evered resume the secretary role, but she refused unless the church agreed to become a Gospel Standard cause. I felt this

was not the right time to consider such a major change, especially as we hadn't even elected a secretary — a prerequisite for conducting any church business. I also knew that both Miss R. Ellis and Mrs C. Gurney were not in favour of the proposal. Nor was I convinced that the underlying motive behind the move was entirely spiritual.

For example, Mrs Groom — Mrs Evered's sister — had recently moved to Bierton. She was in membership with Prestwood Strict Baptist Church, a Gospel Standard cause. She wished to partake of communion with us at Bierton, but the Prestwood church wouldn't grant her permission because Bierton was not a Standard-listed church, and they weren't satisfied with our Articles of Religion.

This seemed to be the main reason Mrs Evered was pushing the matter — so her sister could join in communion at Bierton without offending her home church. It was not, in my view, a spiritual defence of truth, but rather a family consideration.

Now, had the church wished to align with the Gospel Standard causes for the sake of truth — to distinguish ourselves from other Strict Baptists who upheld the Ten Commandments as the rule of life for the believer and preached "duty repentance" — that would have been another matter entirely. The Gospel Standard Articles were clear on these doctrinal issues.

As acting chairman, I ruled that the church should first elect a secretary, and only then consider joining the Gospel Standard cause. But after discussion, no one was willing to take up the responsibility.

Moved with concern, I offered to help and agreed to act as secretary for a period — despite living in Leighton Buzzard and contemplating a transfer of membership to the Linslade church, where Mr Collier ministered. The church accepted my offer, and I served in that role until 30th April 1980.

The Church Votes Against Joining

At the church meeting on 24th January 1979, where all members were present, we discussed the possibility of joining the Gospel Standard cause. After discussion, a vote was taken — even though Mrs Evered had been the only one to propose it. Four members voted against, and one abstained.

At that same meeting, Mr King proposed that the matter should not be

raised again for another year — a motion which was carried by the vote.

My Letter to the Gospel Standard Committee

Because of the concerns that had been expressed regarding Gospel Standard membership, I decided it was best to write directly to the committee to seek clarification on two matters:

The removal of Mr Hill's name from the Approved List of Ministers.

The interpretation of Article 26.

Here is a transcript of my letter:

To the Gospel Standard Committee
9th July 1979

Dear Sirs,
I am the Secretary of Bierton Strict Baptist Church. During a recent church meeting, we considered seeking membership as a listed Gospel Standard cause. In light of this, there are two matters I wish to clarify:

1. Why was Mr Hill asked to withdraw his name from the Approved List of Ministers? He is one of our trustees and has faithfully served the church at Bierton for many years.

2. Could you please give a clear explanation of the concluding statement of Article 26, which states: "so we deny the doctrine that man in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God." As it reads, it would appear to imply that unregenerate men ought not to please God at all.

Yours faithfully,
David Clarke

Reply from the Gospel Standard Baptist Societies

14th August 1979
From: Mr D.F. Dickerson, Secretary

Dear Mr Clarke,

Thank you for your letter of the 17th July. I was pleased to learn that the church at Bierton is considering seeking membership with the Gospel Standard Churches.

Regarding your questions:

A) Mr Hill:
Mr Hill expressed sorrow over certain matters that had taken place. As a public expression of this, the Committee asked him to withdraw his name from the Approved List of Ministers for twelve months, and he agreed.

B) Article 26:
This article simply means that we do not issue general free-will appeals to a congregation — such as, "repent," "accept Christ," "give your heart to God," and so on. Instead, we preach the vital necessity of repentance and faith in Christ and exhort those who feel their need to flee to Him, as enabled by the Holy Spirit.

There is no suggestion that men in a state of nature ought not to please God. Their duty is clearly revealed in the law of God, but they neither have the ability nor the desire to fulfil it.

May the Lord abundantly bless the flock at Bierton and build you up in His fear and grace.

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,
D.F. Dickerson

I Was Thankful for Their Reply

I was thankful for this clear response. It affirmed that man's responsibility before God was not denied, and that the law of God reveals that responsibility — even if man has no strength to meet it.

However, I would have welcomed further clarification on what was meant by "the law of God," particularly since it was given by covenant to Israel and formed a dividing wall between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:12–14). I could accept the whole of Scripture as "the law of the Lord," but not the Ten Commandments, as given by Moses, being binding upon Gentiles —

whether believers or not.

I understood this to be the Gospel Standard position — as made plain in Article 16, and confirmed by J.C. Philpot in the Gospel Standard of 1862. Should there be any uncertainty, I would recommend Mr Dickerson (or any interested reader) to consult Mr Gadsby's hymn 636, "The Perfect Law of Liberty," and Dr John Gill's commentary and Body of Divinity.

On this point we differ from the Presbyterians, who assert the moral law (i.e. Ten Commandments) is the believer's rule of life. Should the Bierton church move any further toward Gospel Standard membership, I intended to write again to pursue further clarification.

Second Move to Become a Standard Cause

On 23rd April 1980, I requested to be relieved of my duties due to my move to Leicester. Mr King proposed Mrs Evered for secretary. She agreed on the condition that we would again consider Gospel Standard membership. I suggested a provisional three-month period, after which we would vote. Under these terms, Mrs Evered became secretary, and Mr King chairman. A special meeting was booked for 7th July 1980.

New Chairman and Subsequent Meeting

Unbeknownst to me, Mr Hope (minister at Reading) was elected chairman during a meeting held on 21st May 1980. When I learned of the next meeting, dated 18th June 1980, I made every effort to attend. At that meeting, Mrs Evered had asked Miss B. Ellis to bring the deed box containing the chapel's trust deed.

Church Votes Against Joining Again

At the meeting, Mr Hope introduced the matter. The minutes state:

Membership of the Gospel Standard: It was thought a decision should be made. Five were in favour, two against. Since unanimity was desired, and it was lacking, the motion was rejected. It would be brought up again when members were in agreement.

My Comments

I suggested to the chairman and to the church that unless we were of one mind on the matter of joining the Gospel Standard denomination, we ought not to proceed with the application. Mr Hope agreed with this view, as did

most of the members. I was aware that Miss R. Ellis and Mrs C. Gurney were not in favour of such a move—whatever the term 'Gospel Standard' may have meant to them—and neither was I in favour of joining any association without unanimous agreement. I understood that unless the church was united in mind and spirit, we could not reasonably strive together to uphold Gospel order and precepts.

Most of our ministers were not themselves Gospel Standard men and were not in full agreement with the Gospel Standard Articles. It was not my intention to exclude such men from preaching at Bierton. I knew this tension existed, for only a few years earlier, in 1976–77, Mr John Gosden had preached at Bierton and was highly regarded by several members. At that time, Mr Gosden was a member at Grove Chapel, Camberwell, which was not a Strict Baptist church, and he was not aligned with the Gospel Standard cause. If we now became a Gospel Standard church, it would follow that someone like Mr Gosden would be excluded from the pulpit.

Mr Gosden was kind enough to respond to a letter I wrote him after our church had adopted the Gospel Standard Articles. Here is a portion of that correspondence:

John Gosden's Letter – 6th April 1982

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 15th March. I do regret the delay in replying; this has been due partly to heavy commitments and difficulties, and partly to uncertainty regarding whether I could help on any of the suggested dates.

The only possible Sunday would be 26th June 1983, though this is not confirmed. I shall write again shortly to confirm or otherwise.

I pray you will be upheld in your responsibilities as Church Secretary and also in the work of the ministry to which you are called. My late father used to say, "Be a labourer, not a trifler." Wise advice. His faithful preparation and close walk with the Lord, I believe, largely account for the effectiveness of his long ministry.

Regarding the Gospel Standard position: My differences are not with individuals—indeed, many of my close friends are within the denomination—but with several of the Articles of Faith. I find some positions theologically

and experientially unorthodox. In particular:

The view on the relationship between Law and Gospel (Article XVI).

The restriction of Gospel promises, which clouds the warrant of faith (Articles XXIV, XXVI, XXXII, XXXV).

An unorthodox view of sanctification (Article XIX).

I find the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, F.E. Kevan's Salvation, and John Murray's Redemption Accomplished and Applied to be far more satisfactory. Also see A.W. Pink's Man's Total Depravity, Chapter 20.

God willing, I will write again regarding the June date.

Yours sincerely,
John Gosden

Differences of Opinion

Mrs Evered was well aware that Mr Gosden was not a Gospel Standard minister and, for that reason alone, did not wish for him to preach at Bierton. However, her motives were not necessarily honourable, as the following incident demonstrates.

On 18th August 1980, a special church meeting was held to consider whether Mr Friend and his wife—relatives of a member of the congregation—might join with us in communion during their holiday in September. No chairman presided at this meeting, and Mrs Evered acted as secretary.

Mr Just, a member of the congregation, enquired on behalf of his cousin and his wife. Mrs Evered noted in the minutes that the church Mr Friend belonged to was allegedly connected with the Evangelical Times. For this reason alone, she objected to them joining us for communion. She stated that clarity was required regarding whether Mr John Gosden, now Pastor at Southborough (where Mr Friend was in membership), upheld an open communion table. The response was that Mr Gosden did not support an open table.

My Reflections

This event revealed the underlying prejudices and the devious workings of the natural heart. I suspected that the real reason Mrs Evered opposed Mr Friend's request was because Mr Gosden was now his pastor and was known to read the Evangelical Times. She had previously expressed opposition to Mr Gosden on those very grounds.

What is striking is that no consideration was given to Mr Gosden's actual doctrinal stance regarding Law and Gospel or any matter of faith. Either these points were not discerned or were simply not considered important. In truth, Mr Gosden's doctrinal views were not in line with the Gospel Standard Articles—particularly regarding the Law and Gospel. Ironically, neither were Mrs Evered's. She maintained that the Ten Commandments, or the Law of Moses, remained her rule of life.

I had raised these issues in The Bierton Crisis and in Chapter 13 of that work, titled Leprosy Discovered. Despite this, most of the Bierton church and congregation held Mr Gosden in high regard and got along with him well.

My Conclusion

Given my intimate knowledge of the views of the church and congregation at Bierton, I believed it wrong to impose—or subtly engineer—a union with the Gospel Standard churches unless the people were truly informed, convinced, and willing to be governed by the Articles and rules of the Society.

If my reservations were ever expressed, it was only because I believed the people at Bierton were not prepared to walk in the Gospel Standard way. Had they been deeply convinced of the truths expressed in the Articles—moved by reverent fear before the Lord—I would gladly have led the way in preserving those truths. But I did not believe that was the case.

For example, I recall the congregation encouraging children and unconverted parents to sing such hymns as:

"Jesus loves me this I know,
For the Bible tells me so."

Such sentiments, though sweet-sounding, reflect doctrinal looseness. I did not believe the people at Bierton had reached a level of doctrinal and experiential maturity that would allow them to rightly discern the Gospel

Standard distinctives. I suspected the pressure to become a Gospel Standard cause stemmed from carnal motives rather than spiritual convictions. For brevity's sake, I have not listed all of them here, but one example suffices: the desire to join simply so a blood relative could partake in our communion.

Therefore, I resolved not to support the move unless all members were in full agreement and were able to clearly articulate their understanding of the more controversial Articles—particularly Article 26.

However, as the church had already voted to proceed, I saw no reason to resist further at that time.

Third Move Towards Becoming a Gospel Standard Cause

This development came as a surprise to me. I had not expected such a significant matter to be brought before the church as a motion without the proper notice being given. Nevertheless, the minutes of the church meeting held on 10th October 1980 record the following. All members were present except myself:

"Two members were still in opposition to the Gospel Standard churches. Hopefully to, D.V.? Refer latter."

My Observations

I was well aware that Miss R. Ellis and Mrs C. Gurney were opposed to joining the Gospel Standard churches—not in hostility, but by conscientious reservation. Any decision of such importance, I believed, should have been discussed at a properly convened meeting with due notice given to all members, as was required. This protocol had not been followed.

It appeared to me that Mrs Evered was determined to influence both the church and Mr Hope in order to achieve her goal of joining the Gospel Standard denomination, regardless of proper procedure or consensus.

I remained completely unaware of this third attempt until several months later, when I resumed my role as Church Secretary and came across the relevant minutes.

Fourth Move – Becoming a Gospel Standard Cause

The church was formally listed as a Gospel Standard cause following the

subsequent quarterly meeting, at which I was absent. Mr Hope acted as chairman. Had I known that the matter was again on the agenda, I would have done all within my power to attend.

That meeting, held on 16th January 1981, recorded the following:

Joining Gospel Standard – A Listed Cause

Vote taken by ballot.

Result: Unanimous. Mr Hope kindly undertaking the correspondence for joining.

A footnote stated: "Mr D. Clarke to be written to informing him of the results of this meeting."

Shortly afterwards, I received the following letter from Mrs Evered:

Letter from Mrs. Gladys Evered, dated 24th January 1981

Dear David,

Just a line to let you know the result of our church meeting held on the 16th inst. It was decided (taken by ballot) unanimously that we join the Gospel Standard causes. It was a wonderful meeting—I'm sure led by the Holy Spirit.

The chairman was Mr Hope, who kindly consented to deal with the correspondence. A new Bible has been purchased for the pulpit. Repairs previously sanctioned are progressing. The church is praying for a Pastor after the Lord's own heart. It is vital that we, as members of this cause, are united in heart. God loves to answer faithful prayer through His dear Son.

Will you be able to be a helpful member of the church if your circumstances permit?

Trusting Irene and the children are well.

May the Lord richly bless you in your labours for daily bread and for Him.

With Christian love,

Gladys Evered

Hon. Sec.

Reflections on the Endorsement

I found it odd that the whole church was now reportedly unanimous in their decision. Miss R. Ellis and Mrs C. Gurney had previously expressed strong reservations about any such change. Yet, now I was informed otherwise.

I was also concerned that such a matter of serious doctrinal and ecclesiastical consequence had not been dealt with at a specially convened meeting, as was proper, nor had the required notice been given.

In response, I wrote the following letter:

Letter to Mrs. Evered, dated 12th February 1981

Dear Mrs Evered,
Thank you for your letter of 24th January informing me of the outcome of the recent church meeting.

I confirm my approval and willingness to assist the Bierton cause, although my current circumstances are not ideal.

I believe the Gospel Standard causes serve to preserve vital biblical truths—our relationship to the Law as believers, Particular Redemption, and the declaration of the Gospel as opposed to offering it indiscriminately. These are doctrines largely denied in our day.

A right understanding of these doctrines, I believe, fosters reverence and godly fear in our worship of God.

Yours with Christian regards,
David Clarke

Visit to the Bierton Members

Following this correspondence, I visited Mrs Evered and requested to see the minutes of the previous meeting. She refused.

I then visited both Miss R. Ellis and Mrs C. Gurney. Mrs Gurney told me she had felt pressured into agreeing with the motion. She said she was made to feel as though she alone was holding back the will of the church.

Miss Ellis said she misunderstood the method of voting and was, in fact, opposed to the church becoming a Gospel Standard cause.

Mrs Gurney added that Mr Hope had expressed his impatience, saying the matter could not be raised repeatedly and must be settled by secret ballot. It was this vote, misunderstood by Miss Ellis, that resulted in the recorded "unanimous" decision.

Realising what had taken place was not above reproach, I raised the matter with several church members after a subsequent meeting: Mr King, Miss B. Ellis, Mrs Evered, Miss R. Ellis, and Miss G. Ellis.

While I apologised if I had caused offence by making these enquiries, I made it clear I could not in good conscience remain silent. I felt compelled to speak up.

A Request for Redress

I explained that, based on my conversations, both Mrs C. Gurney and Miss R. Ellis were opposed to the motion. The recorded unanimous vote was therefore not representative.

Had I known this matter was to be voted on at the January quarterly meeting, I would have made every effort to attend, as allowed by Gospel Standard Rule 15.

Since the church had previously agreed that such a decision must be unanimous, I requested another vote be taken, with all members present. I also suggested that Mr Hope again chair the meeting, in the spirit of fairness.

The aim was simple: to allow the church to properly consider my objection and determine whether my concerns merited further action.

Reaction of the Church

Mr King felt I was out of order. Miss G. Ellis insisted that both Mrs Gurney and Miss R. Ellis had not been pressured and were fully supportive.

Mr King further stated that I had no right to access the church minutes directly and that they would be read in the usual manner at the next meeting.

Letter from Mr John Just

Around this time, church members received a strongly-worded letter from Mr John Just—a regular visitor—expressing his conscience on several matters:

He objected to women speaking at church meetings, reminding us of scriptural order: "The head of every man is Christ; the head of the woman is the man."

He believed elders should be appointed for decision-making.

He urged believers to submit to those who have the rule over them.

Regarding Miss R. Ellis, who was then unwell, the consensus was that the matter should not be pursued further.

My Response

I believed the church had acted improperly. Yet, like the account of Jacob's deception in Genesis, I acknowledged that though the means may have been flawed, the Lord's purposes may still be served.

Still, my conscience was not at ease. I decided to seek further clarification from the Gospel Standard Committee to ensure we had acted rightly in affiliating with them.

My concerns were many:

Did the Bierton folk fully grasp the implications of becoming a Gospel Standard cause?

Were they aware that several of our regular ministers did not agree with the Gospel Standard Articles?

Though I accepted those Articles myself, I had done so only after due study and confirmation. I feared the church had not given similar consideration.

Our Trust Deed had its own Confession of Faith, which could not be altered (cf. Galatians 4:23). If we were to use the Gospel Standard Articles as a supplement, we ought to append clarifications—particularly regarding Articles 26 and 32, which had already caused much confusion.

But I doubted the Bierton fellowship possessed the theological clarity to

manage this. Yet I felt duty-bound to press on, believing that if the Lord was to bless the work at Bierton, we must walk in doctrinal integrity.

On Women Speaking at Church Meetings

I was also concerned about the conduct of our meetings. The Gospel Standard rules—rightly based on Scripture—prohibit women from speaking in church meetings. At Bierton, however, this had always been the practice and continued to be so.

Church Reaction to Mr Just's Letter

At the church meeting of 3rd April 1981, Mr Just's letter was brought up. Mr Hope criticised it, saying it should have been addressed to him personally and signed. He proposed a formal letter of rebuke from the church.

The church rejected the charge that women were usurping authority.

My Final Thoughts

I believed Mr Just was well within his rights. The church had never established formal procedures for handling such concerns. Mr Hope was merely the chairman, not an overseer, and the matters raised by Mr Just were sincere and biblically grounded.

At this meeting, Mr Hope also referred to a letter he had received from Mr Dickinson, Secretary of the Gospel Standard Committee. It contained replies to questions I had submitted privately.

He asked if I was satisfied with their response. I answered that I was. Mr Hope seemed surprised, but I later explained the basis of my queries, and he seemed to understand.

Letter to the Gospel Standard Committee

In my growing concern over our position as a church—now associated with the Gospel Standard denomination—I felt it necessary to seek clarification directly from the committee. As a relatively young believer, with no family ties to the Strict Baptist tradition, I lacked the inherited understanding that many seemed to take for granted.

Here is the letter I wrote:

David Clarke
4th August 1981

To: Mr. Dickinson, Secretary, Gospel Standard Committee

Dear Mr Dickinson,

Re: Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church and her association with the Gospel Standard denomination.

I write seeking clarification on several matters regarding our church's present association. As secretary and a member of the Bierton fellowship, I believe it is important to understand fully the implications of such a connection. Could you please clarify the following:

Do you have any literature explaining the structure and origins of the Gospel Standard Society? When was the denomination formally constituted and for what reason?

How does the committee function?

How are committee members elected?

What role do churches play within this structure?

What exactly is the Gospel Standard list of ministers?

What is the relationship between the Gospel Standard and the Poor Relief and Bethesda Home Societies?

Additionally:

Does our present association breach any clause in our church's Trust Deed?

Should our trustees be formally informed of this connection?

Does this affiliation mean our Articles of Religion, as outlined in the Trust Deed, are now to be set aside in favour of those published by the Gospel Standard Societies?

P.S. Is any legal amendment to the Trust Deed necessary?

Yours sincerely in Christian regard,

David Clarke
Church Member

Reply from the Gospel Standard Committee

13th August 1981

Dear Mr Clarke,
Thank you for your letter dated 4th August regarding the Bierton church's status and its relationship to the Gospel Standard List of Churches.

As you are no doubt aware, the position was explained when the church unanimously applied for recognition on 16th January 1981. However, I will address each of your questions as numbered:

You may find Historical Sketch of the Gospel Standard Baptists by S.F. Paul helpful—available from the Gospel Standard Trust Publications.

2–3. I enclose a copy of the Societies' Rules, which cover these matters.

I am unsure what you mean, but perhaps the Rules will clarify this.

This is a list of accredited ministers who agree with the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith.

(i) See the Rules; (ii) Please write to Mr A.J. Watts, Secretary of the Bethesda Fund.

Regarding your further questions:

Association with the Gospel Standard will not breach your Trust Deed—unless the Deed specifically forbids it.

This is a matter to take up with your church's Chairman.

No, your original Articles of Religion remain.

P.S. No legal changes to the Trust Deed are necessary.

Yours sincerely,
The Secretary

Clarification by Telephone

On Monday, 17th August 1981, I confirmed by phone that the Trust Deed could not be altered. This was reassuring, but also left several points unresolved in my own mind.

Backlash and Reproof from Mrs Evered

Shortly after receiving this reply, the matter became known to Mrs. Evered. She telephoned to reprove me, accusing me of misrepresenting the church and acting outside my bounds as a member.

Though I had drafted a letter in response, I later refrained from sending it—fearing I may have been motivated more by offence than love. Nevertheless, for the record, here is that unsent letter:

David Clarke
28th August 1981

To: Mrs. Gladys Evered

Dear Mrs Evered,

Thank you for your recent phone call. Please allow me to clarify: my letter to Mr Dickinson was a personal enquiry—it concerned my own conscience and understanding. I did not claim to speak for the church, nor did I reveal any private church matters to the public.

However, your reprimand prompts me to address a broader issue.

This is not the first time you have attempted to exercise authority over me. The first was when you told me to instruct a visiting woman to cover her head during worship. The second was this current situation, where you reproved me for a private letter.

In both cases, you assumed authority not granted to you—neither by the

church nor by scripture. As a woman and as church secretary, you are not authorised to reprove a male member nor act independently of the church's instructions (1 Tim. 2:12).

I trust your actions were not malicious but made in ignorance. Nevertheless, I urge you to reflect on the limits of your office and to act accordingly.

With Christian love and regards,
David Clarke

The Reaction of Mr Dix, Dunstable Baptist Minister

Not long after this episode, Mr Dix visited Bierton to preach during a weekday service. Afterward, in conversation at my home, he expressed dismay that our church had aligned with the Gospel Standard. He alleged we had acted illegally and immorally, claiming that our Trust Deed did not permit such a denominational shift.

His assertion was that if we wished to become a Gospel Standard cause, we should have formed a new church in a new building—as any amendment or departure from the original Trust Deed violated our covenant with the founding trustees and articles.

This greatly troubled me.

Seeking Counsel from Mr Hill, Pastor in Luton

Moved by conscience, I sought advice from Mr Hill—a gospel minister whose wisdom I trusted. I wrote to him:

David Clarke
23rd October 1981

To: Mr. James Hill, Minister of the Gospel, Luton

Dear Mr Hill,

I write to seek your pastoral counsel concerning Bierton Church's recent association with the Gospel Standard.

Mr Dix has claimed our actions are unlawful and immoral. He argues we

have breached our Trust Deed and that such a denominational shift nullifies our founding articles and obligations.

I believe our church's Articles of Faith are not inconsistent with the Gospel Standard Articles. Therefore, our public acknowledgment of Gospel Standard principles does not conflict with our Deed. We still require members to assent to the original Trust Deed Articles.

However, I fear our members may not fully understand this, and some may wrongly believe the Gospel Standard Articles replace the Deed.

I seek your wisdom—both to confirm if our actions were lawful and to determine how best to proceed in peace and truth.

Yours in the cause of Christ,
David Clarke

Mr Hill's Reassuring Reply

27th October 1981

Dear David,

Thank you for your kind and sincere letter. As you know, I am still mourning the sudden loss of my dear wife Beth, so I shall be brief.

Mr Dix is wrong.

Your church's articles are virtually identical to the Gospel Standard Articles. If you can affirm one, you can affirm the other. I am convinced that the godly men who penned your Trust Deed would, in this day, align themselves with the Gospel Standard position. It is the only denomination I know that faithfully upholds the truths we hold dear.

Most of your trustees, I believe, are themselves members of Gospel Standard churches. The late Mr Raven, former chairman of the Gospel Standard Committee and pastor at Smallfields, once told me his own church retained its unique Articles of Faith, yet publicly subscribed to the Gospel Standard Articles—just like your church now does.

I hope this puts your mind at rest.

Please let me know when you've had your next church meeting regarding your exercise to preach. I'd like you to preach at Ebenezer, though for now let's keep this between ourselves.

Warm love to you, Irene, and the children.

Yours in Gospel affection,
James Hill

CHAPTER 20: Mr Royce of Luton and the Added Articles

It was during my time preaching at the church in Eaton Bray, Edlesborough, that I met Mr Stephen Royce of Luton. He enquired concerning the Added Articles of Religion of the Gospel Standard, and the matter weighed heavy on his conscience.

Stephen had grown up attending the Watford Strict Baptist Chapel, where Mr Hill had once been pastor. By the time we spoke, however, he was attending Luton Ebenezer, whose pastor was Mr Sayers Senior—his son, Howard Sayers, having been sent out as a minister from the Watford church. Howard made it clear he did not himself accept the Gospel Standard's Added Articles. This, of course, did little to help Stephen.

Stephen had professed faith in Christ and sought baptism. Yet he faced a problem: Pastor Mr Ramsbottom at Luton could not in good conscience bring Stephen's request before the church, as Stephen could not fully subscribe to the Added Articles. This caused him considerable anguish. He wondered why he couldn't be baptised simply as a believer, without being required to affirm every word of these Added Articles. He felt the wording of some seemed to contradict scripture, and his conscience would not allow him to assent.

Understanding his dilemma all too well, I decided to write to him. At the time, I was a member of a Gospel Standard listed Church and had been called and sent to preach by the Bierton Church—a Gospel Standard cause. The following is the substance of my reply to him, dated 18th August 1984.

Dear Mr Royce,

On Article 32 of the Gospel Standard Articles

I received your request to share my views on Article 32 of the Added Articles, and I am most happy to oblige. First, may I say I believe it is a matter of utmost importance that we be clear on what we are subscribing to when joining any religious society with stated articles of faith. We are not to be like those in the apostate Church of England, who once swore upon the Thirty-Nine Articles but have since made shipwreck of their profession. Such covenant-breaking is a grievous sin, as noted in Romans 1:31, and is a mark of these perilous last days. We must flee from such duplicity.

When first called by grace in 1970, I resolved that I would not join any church or denomination unless I could, with a good conscience, assent to their confessional statements. I later learned that chapels are often bound by a Trust Deed, which names the beneficiaries and outlines the tenets of faith to be maintained therein. Trustees are sworn to uphold and defend those doctrines. I was once asked to be a trustee of Bierton Chapel in 1976 but declined, for I then had questions concerning strict communion. I now believe strict communion to be biblical, though how it is administered is another matter. My disagreement at the time led me to decline the invitation on principle.

Now to the point: never give assent to any doctrinal article unless your conscience, instructed by the Word of God, allows it. A regenerate soul is given a tender and good conscience; to violate it is to invite spiritual ruin. Better to remain outside a church than to betray your conscience.

To examine Article 32, I propose to:

Consider the article as written.

Break it into its component parts.

Identify the main doctrinal assertion.

Evaluate it in light of the whole confession.

Share my opinion.

Examine its historical purpose.

Discern what error the compilers sought to guard against.

Clarify what we can truthfully affirm.

Advise on the proper response if the article is found wanting.

Refer to Mr Popham's remarks from 1906.

Respond to each assertion.

Offer a conclusion.

Article 32 reads as follows:

"We believe that it would be unsafe; from the brief records we have of the way in which the apostles, under the immediate direction of the Lord, addressed their hearers in certain special cases and circumstances, to derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses in the present day under widely different circumstances. And we further believe that an assumption that others have been inspired as the apostles were has led to the grossest errors amongst both Romanists and professed Protestants."

The article contains several key assertions:

Our biblical records of apostolic addresses are brief.

These were special and circumstantial cases.

The apostles acted under the immediate direction of the Lord.

From these examples, we cannot derive universal rules for ministerial addresses.

Those apostolic cases were under very different circumstances from our own day.

It is unsafe to apply their methods universally.

No modern minister has the inspiration the apostles had.

Assuming such inspiration has led to grievous errors.

The central claim is:

We should not derive universal rules for preaching from apostolic addresses recorded in Scripture, especially as some have done, leading to errors such as universal offers and free-will appeals.

My comments are as follows:

While the apostolic addresses are brief, the scriptures are sufficient for doctrine, reproof, and instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

Every recorded event in Scripture is, in a sense, special and circumstantial. But that does not render them irrelevant.

Apostles were sometimes under immediate divine direction, but not always—consider Peter's failings. However, since the article gives no specific example, we cannot judge.

We do not derive doctrine from isolated texts but from the whole counsel of God. Nevertheless, apostolic practice is instructive.

Circumstances in 1878 differed from apostolic times, true—but truth is unchanging.

It is unsafe only if one isolates and misapplies the texts. Otherwise, apostolic precedent is highly valuable.

Agreed—none today are inspired as the apostles were.

We also agree that the errors of Rome and others stem in part from assuming false inspiration.

The real concern behind this article, it seems, is to avoid appeals to unregenerate sinners to "accept Christ" or "make a decision," as if they had the ability apart from the Spirit. This aligns with the rejection of Duty Faith

in Article 26. Such universal appeals contradict particular redemption, and assume grace is available to all.

Evangelical repentance and saving faith are gifts of grace, not duties for all men to perform. Legal repentance, as taught by the law and natural conscience, is indeed required of all; but the repentance that leads to life is from God alone.

Thus, while all men ought to turn from sin, only the elect shall receive the grace to do so unto salvation. Ministers must not exhort the spiritually dead as though they had power within themselves to respond. Our Lord said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44).

Mr Popham, in 1906, wrote:
"It is not for me to say what was in the minds of the framers of those Articles, nor yet affirm that they were all accurate theologians."

This admission is telling. If he could not say what the compilers intended, how can we be sure now? Hence, I believe this article would have been better left out. It is vague, easily misunderstood, and not directly supported by scriptural citation.

Conclusion:

We must judge every article by the Word of God. Though Article 32 has a noble aim—to guard against free-willism—it lacks clarity. It neither helps the tender conscience nor provides firm ground for instruction. A better approach is to plainly teach the doctrines of grace and let the Word be our rule.

I hope these reflections help, dear brother. May the Lord guide you into all truth.

Yours in the love of Christ,

David Clarke

CHAPTER 21: Gospel Standard Articles Of Religion

1. The Holy Scriptures

We believe in the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and receive them as a gracious revelation of the mind and will of God[1]; And we believe that therein are revealed all the doctrines and truths which we here state[2].

2. The Trinity

We believe that there is but one living and true God[3]; that there are Three Persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost[4] – and that these Three Persons are equal in nature, power and glory; and we believe that the Son and the Holy Ghost are as truly and as properly God as the Father[5].

3. The Everlasting Love Of God; Election; Predestination; Adoption; And The Eternal, Covenant Of Grace

We believe in the everlasting and unchangeable love of God[6]; and that before the foundation of the world the Father did elect a certain number of the human race unto everlasting salvation, whom He did predestinate unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will[7]; and we believe that in fulfilling this gracious design, He did make a covenant of grace and peace with the Son and with the Holy Ghost on behalf of those persons thus chosen[8], and that in this covenant the Son was appointed a Saviour, and all spiritual blessings provided for the elect, and also that their persons, with all the grace and glory designed for them, were put into the hands of the Son as their Covenant Head, and made His care and charge4.

4. The Fall Of Man

We believe in the Fall of our first parents, and that by it the whole of the human race became involved in, and guilty of, Original Sin; and that as they

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1 Deut. 4. 2; Ps. 19. 7; Prov. 30. 5, 6; 2 Pet. 1. 19-21; Rev 22. 18, 19; John 5. 39.
2 2 Tim. 3. 15-17.

3 Exod. 3. 14; Deut. 4. 35; Deut. 6. 4; Num. 23. 19; 1 Sam. 2. 2, 3; Ps. 90. 2; Ps. 115. 3; Ps. 135. 5; Ps. 139. 7-10; Prov. 15. 3; Ecc. 3. 14; Isa. 40. 28; Isa. 45. 22; Isa. 46. 9; Jer. 10. 10; Jer. 23. 24; Mal. 3. 6; Mark 12. 29; John 4.24;1 Cor. 8.6; Col.1.16.
4 Matt. 28.19; John1.1; 2 Cor.13.14; 1 John 5.7; Jude 20, 21.
5 John 10. 15, 30; Eph. 2. 22; Heb. 1. 3; Heb. 9. 14.
6 Jer. 31. 3.
7 Gal. 4. 5; Eph. 1. 2-13; 1 Thess. 5. 9; 2 Thess. 2. 13; 2 Tim.1.9; 1 John 3.1; 1Pet.1.2; 1 Pet.2.9.3 2 Sam. 23. 5; John 1. 17.
8 2 Sam. 23. 5; John 1. 17.

are born into the world, the whole of their posterity are, in consequence, actual transgressors against God[9]. And we believe that by the Fall all men were rendered both unable and unwilling spiritually to believe in, seek after, or love God until called and regenerated by the Holy Ghost[10].

5. The Sacred Humanity Of The Lord Jesus Christ And His Offices As Mediator, Surety And Substitute

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, being set up from everlasting as the Mediator of the New Covenant, and having engaged to be the Surety of His people, did, in the fulness of time, really and truly assume human nature, and not before, either in whole or in part[11]. And we believe that, though He existed from all eternity as the eternal Son of God[12], the human soul of the Lord Jesus did not exist before it was created and formed in His body by Him who forms the soul of man within him, when that body was conceived, under the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary[13]. And we believe that Christ's human nature consists of a true body and reasonable soul, both of which, together and at once, the Son of God assumed into union with His Divine Person, when made of a woman and not before[14]; that this human nature was not sinful, peccable, or mortal[15], though capable of death by a voluntary act[16], but essentially and intrinsically pure and holy[17]; and that in it He really suffered, bled and died, as the Substitute and Surety of His church and people, in their room and stead, and for no others[18]; whereby, together with His holy, spotless life, He fulfilled the law, and satisfied all the claims of justice, as well as made a way for all those blessings which are needful for His people, both for time and eternity[19].

6. Particular Redemption

We believe that the eternal redemption which Christ has obtained by the

9 Rom. 5. 12-21; Ps. 58. 3.
10 Gen. 6.5; Gen. 8.21; Job 14.4; Job 25.4; Ps. 51.5; Jer. 13. 23; Jer. 17. 9; Matt. 15. 19; Rom. 3. 10-24; Rom. 5. 12-19; 1 Cor. 15. 22, 45-50; Eph. 2. 3; 1 John 5. 19.
11 Prov. 8. 23.
12 John1.18; Phil.2.5-8; Heb.1.5,8; Heb.13.8; 2John3; Rev. 1. 8.
13 Isa. 7. 14; Matt. 1. 23; Luke 1. 26-38; John 1. 14; Gal. 4. 4.
14 Luke 2. 40; Heb. 2. 14-17.
15 Ps. 16. 10; Acts 2. 27.
16 John 10. 17, 18.
17 Song 5. 9-16; Heb. 7. 26.
18 John 10. 15, 26; John 17. 9, 13.
19 Heb. 9. 22-28.

shedding of His blood is special and particular[20]; that is to say, that it was intentionally designed only for the Elect of God, the Sheep of Christ, who therefore alone share in the special and peculiar blessings thereof [21].

7. Imputed Righteousness;

Justification; And Pardon

We believe that the justification of God's Elect is only by the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ imputed to them[22], without consideration of any works of righteousness, before or after calling, done by them, and that the full and free pardon of all their sins, past, present, and to come, is only through the blood of Christ, according to the riches of His grace[23].

8. Regeneration

We believe that the work of regeneration[24] is not an act of man's free will and natural power, but that it springs from the operation of the mighty, efficacious and invincible grace of God.

9. Conviction Of Sin;

Believing In Christ; And Final Perseverance

We believe that all those who were chosen by the Father and redeemed by the Son, and no others, shall, at the appointed time, certainly be convinced in their hearts of sin by the Spirit[25], be brought in guilty before God, and made the recipients of eternal life, coming to Christ for salvation, and believing on Him as the Anointed of the Father, and the only Mediator between God and man[26]; but that none can spiritually come to Christ unless drawn by the Father[27]; and that all the elect shall be thus drawn to Christ, and shall finally persevere; so that not one of the elect shall perish, but all arrive safely in glory[28].

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20 Gal. 3. 13; Heb. 9. 12-15.
21 Isa. 35. 10; John 10. 15, 25-28; Acts 2. 47; Acts 13. 48; Acts 20. 28; Rom. 5. 8-10; Rom. 8. 33, 34; Rom. 9. 13, 15, 16; Rev. 14. 4.
22 Isa. 45. 24; Isa. 64. 6; Jer. 23. 6; Matt. 7. 18; Luke 18. 13; Acts 13. 39; Rom. 4. 4, 5; Rom. 5. 19; Rom. 10. 4; 1 Cor. 1.30; 2Cor.5.21; Phil.3.9; Titus3.5.
23 Rom. 3. 20-27; Rom. 4. 22; Rom. 9. 11; 2 Tim. 1. 9; Heb.1.3; Heb.9.22; 1Pet.3.18; 1John2.1.
24 Jer. 50. 20; Ps. 110. 3; John 1. 13; John 6. 29, 63, 65; John 16. 8; Rom. 8. 16; Rom. 11. 4, 6; James 1. 18.
25 John 16.8; 1Cor.2.14; Eph.2.1.
26 1Tim.2.5; Heb.8.6; Heb.9.15; Heb.12.24.
27 John 6. 44, 65.
28 Job 17. 9; Matt. 25. 34; John 4. 14; John 5. 24; John 6. 37, 44-47; John 10. 28; John 17. 6, 12, 24; Acts 2. 47; Rom. 8. 29-39; Phil. 1. 6; 1 Pet. 1. 3-5.

10. Spiritual Death And Spiritual Life

We believe that all men are by nature so completely dead in trespasses and sins that they cannot, while in that state, know or feel anything of God in Christ, spiritually, graciously, and savingly[29]. And we believe that, when quickened into everlasting life in Christ (as the elect alone are, or can be, or will be), the vessel of mercy then first feels spiritually the guilt of sin, and is taught to know, in his own experience, the fall and ruin of man[30]. Thus every quickened child of God is brought, in God's own time and way, through the Spirit's teaching, from necessity to depend for salvation on Christ's blood and righteousness alone[31]. And we believe that this teaching will not lead him to licentiousness, but make him willing to walk in good works, to which he is ordained, and which are acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ[32].

11. Man Unable To Perform Spiritual Good Works Until He Is Called By Grace

We believe that man can never do a good work, properly so called, until the grace of God is implanted in his heart[33], and that nothing is spiritually good but what God Himself is pleased to communicate to, and work in, the soul, both to will and to do of His good pleasure[34]. And we also believe that man's works, good or bad, have not anything to do with his call, or being quickened, by the Holy Spirit[35].

12. Effectual Calling; The Application Of The Law; And The Manifestation Of Mercy And Pardon

We believe in the effectual calling of all the elect vessels of mercy out of the ruins of the Fall in God's appointed time, and that the work of regeneration, or new birth, is the sovereign work of God, and His work only, the sinner being as passive therein as in his first birth, and previously thereto dead in trespasses and sins[36]. We believe in the application of the Law to the elect sinner's conscience by the Spirit of God[37], showing the sinner how greatly he has broken that Law, and feelingly condemning him for the same; and in the manifestation of mercy and pardon through Christ alone made known

29 Eph. 2. 1-3.
30 Isa. 1. 6; Rom. 3. 10-19; Rom. 7. 18.
31 John 6. 68; John 10. 9; John 14. 6; Acts 4. 12; Eph. 2. 8-10; Heb. 6. 18.
32 Rom. 8. 14; Gal. 5. 16-25; Gal. 6. 14-16. 19
33 Rom. 8. 8.
34 Phil. 2. 13.
35 2Cor.3.5; Eph.2.3-9; Tit.3.5; Heb.13.21.
36 John 3. 3-8; John 6. 37-65; Rom. 8. 30; 1 Cor. 1. 26-29; Eph. 2. 4, 5.
37 Rom. 7. 7, 9, 12.

to the soul by God the Holy Ghost[38].

13. The Effects Of Faith

We believe that faith is the gift of God[39], as well as true spiritual repentance and hope[40], and a manifestation of pardon to the soul; that through faith Christ is made precious to the soul[41], and the soul drawn out in love to God[42]; that all are the fruits and effects of the blessed Spirit, and that they will most certainly be productive of good works, and a walk and conversation becoming the Gospel[43].

14. The Resurrection Of The Body;

And Eternal Glory Or Damnation

We believe in the Resurrection of the body, both of the just and the unjust[44];that the just (the elect) shall be raised up in glory and honour[45], and be openly acknowledged and fully acquitted in the Judgment Day, before angels, devils and sinners, and made fully and eternally blest both in body and soul; and that the wicked shall be raised up to be condemned, body and soul, to the unspeakable torments of hell for ever and ever[46].

15. Baptism And The Lord's Supper

We believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper[47] are ordinances of Christ, to be continued till His Second Coming; and that the former is requisite to the latter; that is to say, that those only can scripturally sit down to the Lord's Supper who, upon their profession of faith, have been baptized, by immersion, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and that, therefore, what is called "Mixed Communion"[48] is unscriptural, improper, and not to be allowed in the churches of Christ[49].

16. The Gospel is the Believer's Rule Of Conduct Not The Law.

We believe that the Believer's Rule of conduct is the gospel, and not the law,

38 Ps.30.3; Ps.130.7; Isa.40.2; Jer.33.8; Mic.7.18; Rom. 7. 5-10.

39 Eph. 2. 8.
40 Acts 5.31; Rom. 15.13; 2 Thess. 2.16; 1 Pet.1.3.
41 1 Pet. 2. 7.
42 1 John 4. 19.
43 Gal. 2. 16-21; Gal. 5. 22-26.
44 Acts 24. 15.
45 Matt. 24. 31; Matt. 25. 31-40.
46 Isa. 26. 19; Dan. 12. 2; Matt. 25. 31-46; John 5. 28, 29; Acts 23. 6; Rom. 6. 23; Rom. 8. 11, 23; Rom. 14. 10-12; 1 Cor. 15. 52; 2 Cor. 5. 10; Rev. 20. 12-15.
47 1Cor.11.2,26; 1Cor.14.40; Col.2.5-8.
48 Rom. 16. 17
49 Matt. 3. 13-16; Matt. 28. 19, 20; John 3. 22, 23; Acts 2. 37-42; Acts 8. 12; Acts 9. 18; Acts 10. 47, 48; Acts 16. 14, 15, 30, 31, 33; Acts 18. 8; Acts 19. 1-6; Rom. 6. 3; Col. 2. 12.

commonly called the Moral Law, issued on Mount Sinai, which hath no glory in it by reason of the glory that excelleth, that is to say, the Gospel[50]; the Gospel containing the sum and substance and glory of all the laws which God ever promulgated from His throne, and the Jews, because of the hardness of their hearts, being permitted some things which the Gospel forbids[51].

17. Infant Baptism Denied

We deny and reject, as unscriptural and erroneous,the baptism of infants[52], whether by immersion, sprinkling, pouring, or any other mode.

18. Baptismal Regeneration Denied

We reject as blasphemous the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration[53]; that is, that the person baptized is or can be regenerated in, by or through baptism, much less, if possible, by infant sprinkling.

19. Sanctification

We believe in the sanctification of God's people, the term sanctification signifying a separation and setting apart by and for God. This, in the child of God, is three-fold: 1, by election by God the Father[54]; 2, by redemption by God the Son[55]; and 3, by the almighty regenerating operation of God the Holy Ghost[56]. We believe that the blessed Spirit is the Author of what is styled in Scripture the new creature, or creation[57], or new heart[58]; being, in truth, an implantation of the Divine nature[59], through which the child of God would, according to the inner man[60], be holy as God is holy, and perfectly fulfill all the good pleasure of the Father's will; but groans being burdened, being constantly opposed by the contrary workings of the old man[61]. We reject the doctrine of progressive sanctification, or that a child of God experiences such a gradual weakening, subduing, or rectification of the old nature, called in Scripture the old man[62], or such a continued general improvement as shall make him at any time less dependent upon the communications of the Spirit and grace of Christ for all goodness, or less a poor, vile, wretched, helpless

50 Gal. 6. 15, 16; 2 Cor. 3. 10; Rom. 7. 2-4.
51 Deut. 24. 1; Matt. 19. 8, 9.
52 Heb. 11. 6; Acts. 8. 12, 37.
53 John 1. 13; 1 Pet. 1. 23.
54 Jude 1.
55 John 17. 19.
56 Rom. 15. 16.
57 2 Cor. 5. 17; Eph. 4. 24.
58 Ezek. 36. 26.
59 2 Pet. 1. 4.
60 Rom. 7. 22.
61 Rom. 7; Gal. 5. 17.
62 Eph. 4. 22; Col. 3. 9.

sinner in himself, and in his own estimation[63].

20. Growth in Grace

We believe that the grace of God produces a real change in a man, and teaches him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live godly[64], and that there is a growth in grace[65], which consists principally in a growing experimental knowledge of a man's sinful self[66], the vanity of the creature, the glory of God, the spirituality of His law, and the want and worth of Jesus Christ. This is accompanied by a deepening distrust of everything but the grace and love of God in Christ for salvation, and is not a growth in conscious goodness, but in felt necessity and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ[67].

21. Indwelling Sin

We reject the doctrine of perfection in the flesh, or that the believer ever becomes free from indwelling sin[68] in this life, or whilst in the body. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

22. Backsliding And Chastening

We reject the doctrines that the children of God cannot backslide, and that God does not chastise His people for sin[69]. For, though we believe that a child of God is called from a death in sin to a life of righteousness, and would, according to the law of his mind, or new nature, in all respects obey God's holy will as declared in the Scriptures, yet through the temptations of Satan, the allurements of the world, and the power and deceitfulness of indwelling sin, he may fall for a season like David, Peter, and other Bible saints did[70]. But we believe that when the children of God thus sin against God, and transgress His holy revealed will, God does in various ways and degrees chastise them for it[71], not in vindictive anger, but in tender love, as a father does the son in whom he delighteth[72]. We believe, too, that in this matter of chastisement for sin God will deal in a most sovereign way, and as a God of judgment; so that, though the punished child shall be made to

63 John15. part of 5; 2 Cor. 3.5; Rev .3.17.
64 Tit. 2. 11, 12.
65 2 Pet. 3. 18; Phil. 3. 8-10; Mark 4. 26-29; 1 John 2. 12, 13.
66 1 Kings 8.38; Ezra 9.6; Job 40.4-6; Ps. 73.22; Dan. 10. 8.
67 John 3.30; 1Cor. 2.2; Tit. 3.3-8; Eph. 3.8; 1 Tim.1.15.
68 1 John 1. 8; 1 Kings 8. 46; Job 9. 2; Job 15. 14; Ps.119. 96; Prov. 20. 9; Ecc. 7. 20; Rom. 7. 18.
69 1 Cor. 11. 32.
70 Jer. 3. 14, 22; Hos. 14.
71 Ps. 89. 30-33; Prov. 3. 11, 12.
72 Job 5. 17; Ps. 94. 12; Ps. 119. 67; Isa. 54. 7, 8; Heb. 12. 5-11.

discern the reason of the rod[73], it is seldom safe for others to judge according to the outward appearance. We further believe that no man living in habitual sin gives any proof that he is a child of God, and we cannot, therefore, have fellowship with him, be his profession what it may.

23. Final Perseverance

We believe, as expressed in Article 9, in the doctrine of the final perseverance[74] of the saints, and that, however much the elect of God may be tried by sin, and opposed by Satan, they shall all eventually attain to everlasting glory. Not one of them shall perish, for none can pluck them out of the Father's hand.

24. Gospel Invitations

We believe that the invitations of the Gospel[75], being spirit and life*, are intended only for those who have been made by the blessed Spirit to feel their lost state as sinners and their need of Christ as their Saviour, and to repent of and forsake their sins.

25. Universal Redemption Denied

We deny that Christ died[76] for all mankind.

26. Duty Faith And Duty

Repentance Denied

We deny duty faith and duty repentance – these terms signifying that it is every man's duty to spiritually and savingly repent and believe[77]. We deny also that there is any capability in man by nature to any spiritual good whatever. So that we reject the doctrine that men in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God[78].

27. The Non-Elect Incapable Of

Receiving Grace

We deny that the Holy Spirit ever enlightens[79] the non-elect, to make them

73 Mic. 6. 9.
74 Isa. 51. 11; John 10. 28, 29.
75 Isa. 55. 1; John 7. 37; Prov. 28. 13; Matt. 11. 28-30; John 6. 37.
76 Matt. 25. 31-46; John 10. 11, 15, 26.
77 Gen. 6. 5; Gen. 8. 21; Matt. 15. 19; Jer. 17. 9; John 6. 44, 65.
78 John12.39,40; Eph.2.8; Rom.8.7,8; 1Cor.4.7.
79 Isa. 6. 9, 10; John 14. 17; Rom. 11. 7, 8; Mark 4. 11, 12; Luke 8. 10; John 12. 39, 40.

capable at all of receiving grace.

28. Baxterianism Denied

We reject the doctrine called "Baxterianism"; that is to say, that while all the elect shall assuredly be saved, there is a residuum of grace in Christ for the rest, or any of the rest, if they will only accept it[80].

29. Indiscriminate Offers Of Grace Denied

While we believe that the Gospel is to be preached in or proclaimed to all the world, as in Mark 16. 15, we deny offers of grace; that is to say, that the gospel is to be offered indiscriminately to all[81].

30. Christ's Glorified Body

We believe that the glorified body of the Lord Jesus Christ is the same flesh and bones now in heaven as that which hung upon the cross[82].

31. Annihilation Of The Wicked Denied

We reject the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked, and believe that all who die out of Christ shall be turned into hell, the fire of which shall never be quenched, the wicked there suffering for ever the torments of eternal fire[83]. Note: It is the same word in the Greek which, in Matt. 25. 46, declares the eternity of life for the sheep which declares the eternity of punishment for the goats. So (Rev. 20. 15), those who are "not written in the book of life" are "cast into the lake of fire", where they are "tormented for ever and ever" (Ver. 10). Now the same words which are there translated "for ever and ever" are also used in Rev. 10. 6, where the angel "swear by Him that liveth for ever and ever". Therefore, if God is "to live for ever and ever", the torment in the lake of fire is to be for ever and ever; for the words are exactly the same in both passages.

32. Preaching Of The Gospel

(Apostolic Uniqueness)

We believe that it would be unsafe, from the brief records we have of the way in which the apostles, under the immediate direction of the Lord, addressed their hearers in certain special cases and circumstances, to derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses in the present day under widely- different circumstances. And we further believe that an assumption that others have been inspired as the apostles were has led to the grossest errors amongst both Romanists and professed Protestants.

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80 John 3. 27; 1 Cor. 2. 14.

81 Mark 16.15; 2 Cor. 4.3,4.

82 1 Cor. 15. 16, 20; Luke 24. 39; Acts 1. 9, 11.

83 Matt. 25. 46; Rev. 19. last part of 20; Rev. 14. 10, 11; Rev. 20. 10, 15.

Note: When Articles 32-35 were added to the original 31 Articles, no Scripture references were provided, except for Article 35. Readers are referred to pages 150-152 of the book, What Gospel Standard Baptists Believe, where several Scripture references are given. For details of this book, see Note at the end of the Preface on page 7.

33. Preaching To The Unconverted

Therefore, that for ministers in the present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe, and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Ghost, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power, and, on the other, to deny the doctrine of special redemption.

Note: For Scripture references, see the Note which appears at the foot of Article 32.

34. Preaching Of The Gospel

(Exhorting The Unregenerate)

We believe that any such expressions as convey to the hearers the belief that they possess a certain power to flee to the Saviour, to close in with Christ, to receive Christ, while in an unregenerate state, so that unless they do thus close with Christ, etc., they shall perish, are untrue, and must, therefore, be rejected. And we further believe that we have no Scripture warrant to take the exhortations in the Old Testament intended for the Jews in national covenant with God, and apply them in a spiritual and saving sense to unregenerated men.

Note: For Scripture references, see the Note which appears at the foot of Article 32.

35. Degrees Of Faith

We believe that there are various degrees of faith, as little faith and great faith[84]; that when a man is quickened by the blessed Spirit, he has faith given him to know and feel that he is a sinner against God[85], and that without a Saviour he must sink in black despair. And we further believe that such a man will be made to cry for mercy, to mourn over and on account of his sins[86], and, being made to feel that he has no righteousness of his own[87], to hunger and thirst after Christ's righteousness; being led on by the Spirit until, in the full assurance of faith, he has the Spirit's witness in his heart that

84 Matt. 6. 30; Matt. 15. 28.
85 Luke 18. 13.
86 Matt. 5. 4.
87 Isa. 64. 6; Phil. 3. 9.

his sins are for ever put away[88]; but that the faith is the same in nature as is imparted in his first awakenings, though now grown to the full assurance thereof.

Declaration (Especially for church members)

Now all and each of these doctrines and ordinances we can honestly say it is our desire to maintain and defend in one spirit and with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

And we desire, by the grace of God, that our conversation, both in the world and in the church, may be such as becometh the gospel of Christ, and that we may live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world.

And, as it regards each other in church communion, we desire to walk with each other in all humility and brotherly love; to watch over each other's conversation, to stir up one another to love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but, as we have opportunity, to worship God according to His revealed will; and, when the case requires, to warn and admonish one another according to God's Word.

Moreover, we desire to sympathise with each other in all conditions, both inward and outward, into which God, in His providence, may bring us; as also to bear with one another's weaknesses, failings, and infirmities; and particularly to pray for one another, and for all saints, and that the gospel and the ordinances thereof may be blessed to the edification and comfort of each other's souls, and for the gathering in of vessels of mercy unto Christ.

And for every blessing and favour, both temporal and spiritual, we, who are as deserving of hell as the vilest of the vile, desire to ascribe all the praise to the glory of the grace of a Triune God.

Church Rules

The following note is reproduced from earlier booklets:

"Several of the Rules hitherto in circulation being found impracticable, the "Gospel Standard" Committee has formulated the following Rules, and issued them in the hope that they will be useful to the churches. Although it believes that these Rules will be generally acceptable, the Committee desires to make it quite clear that whereas the Articles of Faith are enrolled and binding upon all the churches of the "Gospel Standard" denomination, these Rules are not so, but are for guidance only, and each church will act independently in regard to adopting them or otherwise in regulating its own affairs."

Admittance Into Church Membership

88 Rom. 8. 16; Eph. 4. 30; Heb. 9. 12, 26; Heb. 7. 27; Heb. 10. 14.

1. Any person desiring to become a member of this church, must first be interviewed by the pastor (if there be one) and deacons, who, if in their judgment the candidate is suitable for membership, shall duly bring the matter before the church. A copy of the church's Articles of Faith and Rules to be given to each candidate for their instruction.
2. At a regularly constituted church meeting (see rules 13- 15) the candidate (whether already a member of another church or not) shall make a verbal confession of faith, and declare what he or she believes God has done for his or her soul. If accepted by a vote of the majority of members present and voting, signature in the church book to the Articles of Faith and Rules will be required. Thereafter, at the earliest convenient opportunity, the person shall, unless previously baptized by immersion, be so baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and be formally received into church fellowship at the next observance of the Lord's Supper.
3. Any person who, having been baptized while only in a carnal profession of religion, has since been called by the Spirit of God to a knowledge of his or her lost condition by nature and practice, and to living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, being desirous of uniting with this church, shall attend to the ordinance of believers' baptism, according to rule 2 (last clause), for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14. 23).

The Pastorate

4. No minister shall be appointed as pastor until he has supplied at least months on probation, and unless there be in favour at least two-thirds (three-fifths) of the members present and voting at a church meeting duly convened for this particular purpose (see rules 13-15); nor shall any minister be invited to supply on probation without a like majority, also at a duly convened meeting.
5. If at any time where there is a pastor, the conduct of such pastor should be contrary to the precepts of the gospel, or if he should depart from the Articles of Faith or any one of them, or if his ministry should become unprofitable, a majority of the members present and voting at a properly convened church meeting (see rules 13-15) shall be competent to declare that he shall no longer be the pastor; and he shall be removed from the pastorate accordingly. And at such meeting the pastor shall not be present. Always presuming that adequate opportunity has been afforded the pastor to explain himself.

Discipline

NOTE. – The object of discipline in the Church of Christ is (1) The vindication of the truth; (2) The restoration of any offending brother.

6. Any member of this church knowingly receiving the ordinance of the Lord's Supper with any church not of the same faith and order with ourselves, shall be reproved; and should the offence be repeated, be withdrawn from.
7. Any member knowing another to act disorderly, shall tell the offending brother or sister of his or her fault alone, in the spirit of meekness (Gal. 6. 1); and if not satisfied with the explanation, shall acquaint the pastor or deacons of the church with the matter; and if any member neglect to do so, and be found reporting it to others, such member shall be visited and reproved as acting contrary to Scripture rule.
8. Any member bringing, in any manner, an open reproach on the cause, shall be suspended; and no member suspended for any reason shall again be admitted to the Lord's Supper and to the privileges of membership, until godly sorrow and repentance are manifest, and satisfactory acknowledgment is made to the church.
9. Any member relating to any other person, not a member, what has been said or done at any church meeting, shall be liable, according to the judgment of the pastor and deacons, to be brought before the church to be dealt with.
10. If any member repeatedly neglect to attend the preaching of the Word, the Lord's Supper, and prayer meetings, unless from unavoidable causes known to the pastor and deacons and the church, a reason will be required for his or her absence; and if he or she shall be absent from the Lord's Supper upon more than three successive occasions, without being able to give the pastor or deacons who shall visit such member a satisfactory reason for such absence, they shall bring the matter before the church to be dealt with as it shall determine, whether for reproof, suspension, or withdrawal from the offending party.
11. Members having private differences between themselves shall not bring the same before the church before the rule laid down in Matt. 18. 15, 16, has been first attended to by the offended party; and in the event of satisfaction not being given, that the peace of the church may if possible be preserved, the offended party shall first inform the pastor or deacons (assembled); but if not satisfied with his, or their mediation or decision, the member shall bring the case before the church, by giving one month's notice in writing to the minister or deacons.

Church Meetings

12. A church meeting, at which the pastor or a minister agreed by the church shall preside, shall be held every months, and oftener if required; and it is expected that all the members who are able will attend. No person shall be present at our church meetings but regular members of this church, except by special consent of the church. No member who may be under church

censure shall be present at any church meeting.
13. All church meetings shall be audibly announced from the pulpit or desk when the people are regularly assembled for worship at least on the two Lord's Days immediately preceding the date of any such meeting.
14. The pastor or deacons shall have it in his or their power to call a church meeting whenever he or they consider it necessary; also he or they shall be required to do so when requested by not less than of the members, in any case considered urgent; but in every case proper notice (rule 13) shall be given; and any meeting held, whether called by pastor or deacons, or both, not according to such rule, shall be of none effect.
15. No motion of any serious importance (e.g., cases of discipline, application for membership, call to the ministry, appointment of pastor, etc.) shall be brought forward at any church meeting, unless notice thereof shall have been given at a church meeting held at least one month previous thereto; except in such a case as (in the judgment of the pastor and deacons) the cause of truth would suffer prejudice by delay.
16. All propositions, whether for church membership or otherwise, and all motions, shall be seconded before being put from the chair; and in the event of the voting being equally divided on any subject to be decided, the chairman (president) shall be allowed a second (casting) vote. Any debate or difference that may arise shall be settled by the majority of the members present and voting.
17. When any question has been decided by the majority of the church, if any member shall attempt to set aside or oppose the same decision within six months afterwards, such member shall be accounted as acting disorderly and contrary to rule 16 of this church.
18. Female members may ask questions through a male member, or may, if asked by the chairman (president), answer any question put from the chair; otherwise they are not permitted to speak at church meetings. Should any female member persistently violate this rule, she shall be liable to suspension from the privileges of membership for months.
19. A statement of the finances of the cause shall be laid before the church every months, when the vote of satisfaction or otherwise shall be recorded.
20. The number of the deacons of the church shall not be less than two where practicable; no deacon shall at any time be appointed unless at least two-thirds (three-fifths) of the members present and voting at a church meeting held for the appointment of such deacon, be in favour of such appointment.

Visitors

21. Members of churches of the same faith and order may commune with this church by giving notice (naming their own church) to the pastor or

deacons of their desire to do so not later than before the commencement of the service immediately preceding the communion service; or where the communion service is held separately, not later than the close of the preceding service.

Cessation Of Membership

22. The severance of any member from this church may be only effected by the church itself acting under its duly appointed officers (pastor and deacons), at a properly convened church meeting (see rules 12-15), in the following instances :-

(a) In respect of an orderly member for transfer to another church of the same faith and order, in which event an honourable dismissal should be granted; or,
(b) By disciplinary action of withdrawal AS A LAST RESORT in the case of any disorderly member neglecting to hear either
(1) An offended member's private remonstrance; or, after that,
(2) The additional exhortations of two or three other brethren; or still further,
(3) The admonition of the whole church, according to Matt. 18. 15-17.

Sanctioning A Member To Preach

23. Any member of the church considering that he has received the call of the Holy Spirit to the solemn work of the ministry of the Gospel, shall, before engaging to preach anywhere, relate to the pastor (or deacons where there is no pastor) his exercises relating thereto; who, if in his (or their) judgment the matter is indeed of the Lord, shall name the same to the church assembled according to rule 13. In the event of any question or reason entertained by any member or members (on grounds relating to walk or character) why the case should not proceed, the same must be raised and considered at this preliminary meeting; and no examination of the credentials of the member's call shall be undertaken until such question or reason shall have been satisfactorily disposed of by the church. If then agreed by not less than four-fifths (two-thirds) of the members present and voting, the church shall assemble, a month later (according to rule 15), to hear from the member a relation of the matter, and (either then or at a subsequent meeting, as agreed) to hear also an exercise of his gift in preaching. If approved by four-fifths

(two-thirds) of the members present and voting, the member shall be given the church's sanction to preach.
Any member preaching contrary to or in neglect of this rule shall be dealt with as walking disorderly.
Should the member consider that his case has been prejudiced, or if through assumed prejudice the pastor or deacons do not bring it forward, the matter may be dealt with according to rule 11. But except for very serious defection in the church, it is believed that when such a matter is truly of the Lord no such course will be needful.
Notes:
(1) In some cases where the majority stated is not quite reached, that there may be no precipitate conclusion in so solemn a concern, it may be considered advisable for the church to hear the member preach on some further occasion or occasions, before coming to a final decision. This course should only be adopted when the church agrees by a majority of four-fifths (two-thirds) voting in favour.
(2) In cases of pastorless churches, it may be proper for the church to agree to invite the pastor of another church of the same faith and order to preside at the meetings relating to this important subject.
(3) Bearing in mind the solemn importance of such cases, and the serious responsibility assumed by the church in deciding the same, much earnest prayer is required that the great Head of the church would so dispose each member to act under the spirit of the fear of the Lord, and in the spirit of discernment, and of love to His truth and cause, that the voting may be regulated thereby with a single eye to His glory, according to the will of God.
Note – The blanks in Rules 4, 12, 14, 18, 19 should be filled up, and the alternative majorities in rules 4, 20, 23, be defined, by each individual church.

21 THE HISTORY OF THE ADDED ARTICLES

Of The Gospel Standard Baptists

This history brings to light the sever difficulties that are brought about by badly worded articles of religion. This problem arouse among Particular Baptists in the England , in 1878 when four articles of religion were added to the original 31 Articles of religion that had been adopted by many churches who subscribed to the **Gospel Standard magazine**.
These articles have been referred to as Added Articles and they were written to the prevent the practice of offering the gospel to men rather than preaching Christ.

Introduction

An article written by William Wileman with appended remarks by F. J. Kirby were first published in the November 1921 issue of the monthly magazine "The Christian's Pathway". F. J. Kirby had commenced this magazine in 1896 and was its Editor for more than thirty years and written some 30 years after the Added Articles[89] were added to the existing 31 Articles. History has shown that such unresolved issues mention in these pages have cause a great deal of unrest among Particular Baptist.

Gospel Standard 31 Articles

There were originally 31 Articles of Religions adopted by Particular Baptists by 1843. The four "Added Articles" were specially written in the late 1870's; the effects of those circumstances surrounding these addition remain to this day.

The first 31 GS Articles were compiled in the mid-19th century based upon the Stamford Articles[90] of 1843 and various amendments and additions to those 15 Stamford Articles. The **"Added Articles"** of the late 1870s were put at the end of the 31 Articles to give the final set of 35 GS Articles. These 35 GS Articles are the Articles of Faith written into the Trust Deeds of the GS charitable societies with subscribers and beneficiaries.

Septimus Sears

Septimus Sears a particular Baptist minister wrote in his memoirs about the conflicts that he faced regarding introduction of these added articles. He wrote that toward the end of 1875 there was a period of strife that resulted in the writing of the four "Added Articles". Septimus Sears died whilst under this sustained difficult conflict. Shortly before his death Mr Sears said to a friend:

"They did not mean to kill me but they have done a great deal towards it. I can and do most freely forgive them. They know not what they have done but they did not mean it. Strifes and contentions are not the thing for a dying hour but I have the sweet consciousness that I have spoken God's truth and that I am right and they are wrong."

["Memoir of Septimus Sears" (1880), page 144]

William Wileman

It is clear that the 1921 article by W Wileman had been written after some reluctance. No doubt the writing of it had been prompted by other internal

89 The term Added Articles refers to Articles 32-35 of the GS Articles. The GS Articles are the 35 Articles of Faith embedded in the Trust Deeds of the Gospel Standard Societies formerly known as the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Societies.

90 Stamford Articles: the 15 Articles of Faith written by J C Philpot based on J Gill and adopted in 1843 by the Church at Stamford Chapel under the pastorate of J C Philpot.

controversies amongst Strict Baptists which had erupted in the preceding months and it had become necessary to counter the myths and half-truths which had arisen. As is often the case, those who would prefer to remain silent are sometimes compelled to break their silence

Gospel Standard Magazine

From a letter written by J C Philpot in 1847 it is clear that others, not connected with the Stamford church, wished to adopt his selection of Articles. interest spread more widely a few years later when J Gadsby advertised the set of Articles on the front cover of his magazine "The Gospel Standard. Minor changes to the Articles were followed by major changes as the promotion was maintained in the 1850s and 1860s. J C Philpot died in the last month of the 1860s and the final few Articles were written during the controversies of the 1870s.

During the late 1930s and early 1940s John H. Gosden wrote a series of articles on the GS Articles for inclusion in the issues of the magazine "The Gospel Standard" of those years. In these articles he remarks on a few but not all, of the deficiencies of the GS Articles.

Some years after his death these articles were collated and published in a book. The title of the book (a title not used by J. H. Gosden) suggests that adherents to the GS Articles are satisfied with the deficiencies in them. In a later book of articles it was stated that the GS Articles were "enshrined in Chancery", which to some indicated the Popish progress of veneration for fallible dogma.

Trust Deeds

The terms and Articles (or Doctrines) in the Trust Deeds of a Chapel are binding on the Church using that Chapel. When a Church departs from the terms and Articles (or Doctrines) in the Trust Deeds of its Chapel its occupancy of that Chapel becomes illegal. The constitution of a Church must be in complete conformity with the terms and Articles (or Doctrines) in the Trust Deeds of the Chapel in which the Church meets for worship.

J.K. Popham on Trust Deeds

A paragraph from a letter written by J K Popham (this important letter was written and published in 1921 but has not yet been republished) explains the matter clearly. Addressing his remarks to all persons within the GS association he wrote:

"A Trust Deed once executed settles the destination of the property placed under the control of Trustees to be dealt with as the Deed directs. If the

acceptance of certain Doctrines is made by the Deed a condition of using the settled property or of receiving benefit from it, the law excludes from participation those who do not accept the specified Doctrines, although otherwise qualified; and at the same time equally forbids the exclusion of persons otherwise qualified to accept them. The law will not enquirer into the propriety of the Doctrines upon which the Trusts are based, so long as they are not contrary to public policy, but will enforce them as it finds them, as the founders of the Trust desired.. ."

The phrase "the control of Trustees" refers to the fact that it is the duty of Trustees to uphold the terms and Articles (or Doctrines) in the Trust Deeds (their personal views being irrelevant to the performance of that duty).

The History Of The Four "Added "

Articles: 32, 33, 34, 35. November 1921
By William Wileman

Every earthly event and every human action has two aspects: that which is open and manifest, and that which is unseen and beneath the surface.

I am now advanced in years, drawing near to the end of my course, and shall shortly have to lay down my commission at the feet of my Master. It is well known that there has been much pitiable and unprofitable controversy with regard to the Four "Added " Articles. I have not been unobservant of this controversy, but have resolutely refrained from taking any part in it, believing that it has produced a great amount of harm and been a hindrance to our prosperity. I have not heard of a single instance of conversion as a result. At the same time, I am fully convinced that the spirit which prompted the addition of Articles 32 to 35 has been the cause of much of the declension we so sorely lament in our Churches ; and for this reason l think that daylight is better than darkness.

During the progress of this controversy I have noticed statements that were inaccurate through lack of knowledge of certain facts ; and yet I maintained silence. But as Mr. Kirby has applied to me to verify certain facts, and certain dates, which I alone could do, I have very reluctantly yielded to his desire. But let it be strictly observed that I do this not to add to strife and contention, but rather once for all to end them.

Only Person Living

I am the only living person who knows the secret history of the Four "Added " Articles. I was favored with a lengthened interview with Mr. J. K. Popham in my home on January 26th, 1921 and during conversation I named to him that I had written this Secret History and that in my judgment it was much

to be desired that this should be laid before the Committee, as no present member of the Committee knows anything of the facts. At his request I sent the facts that follow to him on February 3rd, 1921, with the view of my statement being laid before the Committee.
On February 22nd Mr. Popham replied that he had decided that he was not the person to lay it before the Committee.
I am now an elder in the Church of Christ, both as a member and as a minister ; my first poor sermon having been preached in October, 1868. My mature judgment is that controversy, however desirable and even necessary at times, requires certain essential qualifications, and that very few persons possess them. Many persons who enter controversy fondly imagine that they are demolishing Nebuchadnezzars image, while they are only breaking their brother's windows. Right glad should I be if all of us who love and preach the same precious truths could come together and work in harmony ; and if the following statement, painful and sad as it is, should contribute to this, I shall be well repaid for what it will cost me.
I was assistant to Mr. Septimus Sears from the end of 1870 to his death on December 26th, 1877, aged 58.

Sub Editor Gospel Standard

I was sub-editor of the Gospel Standard under Mr. John Gadsby, Mr. Hazlerigg, and Mr. Hemington, from October 21st, 1874, to June, 1881; and editor of the ***Friendly Companion Magazine*** from its commencement in January, 1875, to June, 1881. I was therefore an interested witness of the controversies of those years.
At the end of 1875, as is well known, an ungodly strife was originated by Mr. Gadsby and his helpers concerning the Scriptural teaching of Mr. Sears. This contention continued until Mr. Sears sank under it. I have preserved the letters-nearly a hundred written to me by Mr. Sears, in some of which he describes the exercises of his heart under this cruel persecution.
In October, 1877, Mr. Joseph Hatton, of Redhill, wrote an Article, in four paragraphs, intended by him to be an antidote to the teaching of Mr. Sears. This Article was approved by Mr. Gadsby, and laid before the Committee at its meeting in October, 1877; and notwithstanding the pressure put upon the Committee by Mr. Gadsby, it was laid aside for further consideration. Mr. Hazlerigg especially disapproved of it, as being calculated, and intended, to fetter God's servants in their preaching.
At the Annual Meeting in April, 1878, at the Old Bailey, this Article of Mr. Hatton's, the germ of the Four " Added " Articles, was laid before the meeting for discussion, and raised a violent storm. Mr. Gadsby, Mr. Hatton, and a

few others pressed its acceptance; Mr. Hazlerigg, Mr. Hemington and many others, strongly opposed its adoption.
In a private letter to my mother, dated May 13th, 1878, I have my own notes of that stormy meeting. This letter, which came back to me at my mother's death, contains my account of this meeting; and as it was written while the event was fresh in my memory, it may be accepted as strictly accurate.

Mr. Hazlerigg's Opposition

Mr. Hazlerigg opposed the addition of any new Articles as unnecessary, and as calculated to limit the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in His servants.

Mr. Hemington's Opposition

Mr. Hemington said: "I am here as a godly man to speak and act in the fear of God ; and I oppose them on principle. 'I was present at this meeting officially, to take notes for the Report and for the Gospel Standard for May ; and l reported Mr. Hemington's words verbatim as here given.
The contention grew so warm that 'Mr. Gadsby said he should cancel the Deed of Gift if the new Articles were not passed.
It was at length proposed and agreed that the Four new Articles should be referred to a Committee of nine, for their consideration.
This sub-committee met on Thursday, May 2nd, 1878, and consisted of the following members ; Gadsby, Hatton Hazlerigg, Hemington, Hinton, Knight, Mockford, Vine, and Wilton.
It should be stated that the Articles as proposed by Mr. Hatton condemned the use of words and expressions in preaching, rather than laying down principles.
This sub-committee sat for four hours. Hatton, Hinton, and Knight took the part of Mr. Gadsby; Hazlerigg, Hemington, Mockford, Vine, and Wilton opposed him : four kings against five, as in Genesis xiv.
After considerable discussion, Mr. Hazlerigg took pen and ink and wrote four Articles in a modified form ; namely, very nearly in the form in which they now appear.
Mr. Hazlerigg, who had not forgotten his former attachment to Mr. Sears, pleaded very hard for the adoption of his Articles ; not so much as satisfying his own mind, but for the sake of peace, plainly stating that he was far from being satisfied with the entire transaction. Mr. Gadsby as strongly insisted on the adoption of Mr. Hatton's. It was then put to the vote, when it was found that Mr. Hazlerigg's Articles were carried by five votes against four.

Deed of Gift threat to with draw

When this meeting closed, the members came downstairs and had a long discussion in my presence. The drift of this discussion was to the effect that it was desirable to arrive at some definite result, and even to make this compromise, rather than that Mr. Gadsby should withdraw his gift. But I am able to testify emphatically that both Mr. Hazlerigg and Mr. Hemington strongly objected even to the compromise that had been effected that afternoon

Mr. Hazlerigg's manuscript was handed to me to copy. It was written in one long sentence, as he usually wrote, and l copied it out in four.

The next day, May 3rd, 1878, Mr. Gadsby commissioned me to prepare a new edition of the Articles of Faith, to revise the Scripture references to the 31 Articles, and to make suitable additions to those references ; also to attach Scripture references to the Four "Added " Articles, 32 to 35, and then to send the whole to press.

This occupied me for about three weeks. I added rather extensively to the Scripture references to the original 31 Articles; so that the Scripture references as they now stand were my own careful selection. But when I came to the Four " Added " Articles I hesitated so far as 32, 33 and 34 were concerned, and left them blank.

When this was completed, l took the "copy " up to Mr. Bishop to be set in type, asking him to let me have ten proof-slips. One of these I retained for my own use ; the other nine I sent by post to the nine members of the subcommittee above named, with a note to each, stating that as Article 32 was nu-scriptural, and Articles 33 and 34 were unnecessary. I had left them without any Scripture references. This I repeated afterwards to Mr. Gadsby verbally.

To my intense surprise not one of the nine suggested any Scripture confirmation; and thus Articles 32 33. and 34 have been without such confirmation to the present day, namely, for 43 years.

On the G. S. wrapper, p. xvi, June, 1878, Mr. Hazlerigg tried his best to make an apology for passing these Articles ; and again, on p. xii and xiii of July wrapper ; but it is manifest that even therein he was writing against his better judgment and conscience, as l knew at the time, and as he himself very frequently freely confessed to many persons besides my self.

In addition to this, Mr. Hazlerigg gives his mature judgment concerning the Four " Added " Articles eight years later, in his pamphlet, " A Momentous Question," published by me for him in 1886. He therein distinctly states that he entertained strong objections to those Articles, and gives the grounds of his objections (pages 27 and 28). This pamphlet should be reprinted and widely circulated. I retain the original manuscript.

When it is said that these Articles were "unanimously adopted at a General Meeting of the Societies," it should be realized that it is possible, by stating an art of the truth, to help the reader to believe either more than is true, or less than is true. The Added Articles were indeed laid before the General Meeting in April, 1879, and passed by that meeting; but it must ever be borne in mind:

1 That these meetings have never represented the Churches;

2 That the Annual Meetings of the earlier years, held in the Old Bailey, seldom consisted of more than thirty or forty persons, beside the ministers.

It may be added here that an "Article of Faith " is a definite declaration of a truth to be "most surely believed among us," having the Word of God for its sure foundation. A mere expression of human opinion, however true, is not, and cannot be, an Article of Faith. This is the vital defect of Articles 32, 33, and 34.

Summery

To sum up, we have the seven following facts :

1 The Four Articles were added with the avowed intention of limiting the liberty of ministers in preaching. To deny this is idle and puerile.

2 They were entirely unnecessary, because what there is of any good in them is contained in the earlier Articles.

3 They were passed under a threat from Mr. john Gadsby, and were thus forced upon the Societies.

4 In their final modified form they were yielded as a compromise, for the sake of peace, and to prevent a division.

5 This being so, and viewed in the light of all the circumstances, it is a distinct perversion of truth to say that they were unanimously passed.

6 Their addition at all was most vehemently opposed by many godly men, both in private and in public.

7 Finally : Why were Articles 32, 33, and 34 enrolled in Chancery[91] without any support of Holy Writ, after the nine men had been challenged to produce such support? Are we to expect to find grapes growing on thorns, or figs on thistles? -

With regards to the question of Mr. Hemington's signature to the Added Articles, concerning which so much strife has occurred , the exact truth is as follows. When the New Deed of Gift had been prepared, after Mr. Gadsby had revoked the former Deed in 1879, he asked Mr. Hemington to become a

91 The term "Enrolled in Chancery" has no legal significance. It never possessed any legal significance but has been used by some (but clearly, not by W Wileman) in order to inspire veneration for the GS Articles. Some have imagined that enrolment in Chancery ensures an unalterable permanence for that which is enrolled.

Trustee, and of peace Mr. Hemington agreed to do so. This being necessary for him to attach his signature to the Deed as this Trust Deed contains the 35 Articles. By signing the Deed Mr Hemington signed the Articles as a matter of course, as the greater must always include the less. But this fact by no or alters the larger fact that Mr. Hemington never his disavowed his hostility to the four "Added" Articles, nor did he ever approve of their addition to the day of his lamented death.

I think that all who knew and loved Mr. Hemington, and still revere his memory, will be well able to understand, and even appreciate the apparent inconsistency.

And now what is to be the outcome of all this? Brethren, is better for us to do here below than to write pamphlets?

Whilst we are thus engaged the Holy Spirit is grieved : " Are these His doings ?" The churches are desolated; power is withheld from the ministry; there are few or no conversions; our young people are driven away ; the world rejoices ; Satan triumphs. Can we not meet together with the view of seeking peace? When the Jewish temple had ceased to be had it ceased to be "Mine house," the Lord Jesus left it, never to enter it again, and said : " Your house is left unto you desolate". And it is of no use for us to ask Him to return to us until we first return to Him.

WILLIAM WILEMAN.

44 Caddington Road, London, NW2

Annotations And References

Upon The Forgoing "Secret History."

By The Editor.

In annual the report of that Annual Meeting, held in April, 1878 (see G. S.1878, pp. ix to to xii), we are told that, amongst others, the following were present : then appears a list of names of including ministers, and then the names of 11 ladies. Generally these were attended by only 20 to 30 persons, in addition All money subscribers, whether men or women, possess the right to vote, no matter what his or her religious ' belief may be. This Report is most interesting. In respect to Articles XXXII. to XXXV[92] it reads:

"After considerable discussion in which several friends took part, it was resolved to leave the Articles to the consideration of a Committee consisting of the following friends :-Messrs. Gadsby, Hatton, Hazlerigg, Hemington. Hinton, J. Knight. Mockford, Vine and Wilton: and their decision as to the Articles themselves. and also as to adding them, in their present or an altered

92 Mr. Hatton drew up these Articles in one, about three mouths before the death of Mr. Sears.

form, to the Articles of the Society, was to be Final."
In the same issue, on page xi, we are told :
"The Committee appointed at the 'Aid Society' Meeting met at I7 Bouvier Street, on Thursday, May 2nd, all being present. After a sitting of four hours, "It was resolved, That Articles XXXII., XXXIII., XXXIV., and XXXV., as now amended, be passed, added to the 'Aid Society and made Fundamental Articles of both Societies."
In the above "Secret History " the curtain is drawn aside, and we see, not a prayerful, humble, gracious spirit seeking the good of the Churches, but a spirit of another nature and finally a compromise effected. These Articles stand as the result of a threat. Probably some will be tempted to dispute the accuracy of this statement, but in the course of our historical research we have come across statements from Mr. Gadsby's own pen, which indicates his attitude. He says, when in October, 1877, he gave up the Gospel Standard' Magazine to the Societies :

" I made two reservations

(1) That should the Societies at any time depart from their Articles of Faith, my heirs or executors might take the magazine back.

(2) That should l deem it necessary, I might myself take it back at any time during my life." ...

"I have revoked the Deed of Gift ; but I am prepared to execute another providing a proper understanding can be come to " (Gospel Standard June, 1879, p. 292).

This revoking of the Deed of Gift took place subsequently to the formulating of the Articles in the G. S. wrapper, p. xi, of June issue, 1878.

In July issue of G. S., 1879, on page xi, Mr. Gadsby says 1 "When I gave up the Gospel Standard to our Societies, I had quite intended that the gift should be permanent : and I think it was a great pity that power was reserved to me to take it back, as it subjected me to continual temptations from myself and others, so to do. However, I was led to see my error ; and I now, in accordance with my promise at the meeting on June 6th, unreservedly withdraw all charges of error as made against Mr. Hazlerigg. J. G."
In face of these statements there cannot be the slightest doubt that these Articles were a compromise under threat, and our Churches and ministers

were thus brought into a peculiar position, amounting almost to bondage, for the sake not merely of peace but to retain the " DEED OF GIFT." No wonder strife continued.

Another point to note is that these " Articles of Faith," destitute of any Scriptural proof were enrolled as Fundamental Articles! One feels staggered, and the more deeply we have gone into these matters in our historical research the less we have wondered at the subsequent stumbling, confusion and frequent controversies which have been occasioned by them. The Societies are not the denomination. The denomination as Churches existed long before these Societies have been planted in the soil so these Societies have been planted in the soil of our denomination, and are dependent more or lass on the Churches, and not the churches on them.

Conclusion

From this recorded history and observations it can be seen that errors in doctrine or miss worded articles of religion can cause havoc among believers. Wisdom is necessary to deal with this kind of problem and for this reason I have written my book Difficulties Associated with Articles of Religion Among Particular Baptist asserting that articles of religion should be written as a means of teaching the gospel of our lord Jesus Christs.

CHAPTER 22: John Metcalfe and Tyler's Green Chapel

During the difficulties at Bierton Church, I had the occasion to speak with Dr. John Verna at my home. He informed me that he and his wife had met John Metcalfe of Penn, near High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. Apparently, some of the people associated with his church ran a Christian literature stall in Aylesbury Market Square, where they sold only the Authorized King James Version of the Bible.

I had recently come across a small tract written by John Metcalfe titled "The Gospel of God," which addressed the claims of the Papacy and John Paul II. I found myself in agreement with the tract and was encouraged by its clarity and conviction. I also recalled that our visitor James, who had once attended the Bierton Church, had been under Mr. Metcalfe's ministry. I resolved to visit Mr. Metcalfe and his church.

One Sunday evening, accompanied by my young daughter Esther, then about three or four years old, I drove to Penn and located Tyler's Green Chapel—

Bethlehem Meeting Hall. It was an old chapel enclosed by iron railings, and to my surprise, the gate was locked, even though a meeting was clearly taking place inside. The setting was quite eerie; I half wondered whether the locked gate was symbolic—perhaps a reminder of the five foolish virgins locked out of the wedding feast (Matthew 25:2).

Despite the drizzle and gathering darkness, we waited outside until the meeting ended. When the congregation exited, I approached a gentleman I presumed to be Mr. Metcalfe—shorter in stature, smartly dressed in a cream raincoat, with white or greying hair. He was courteous, and when I introduced myself and asked about the locked gate, he smiled. He assured me it was not a spiritual test but a practical measure against vandalism.

He seemed pleased that I had read his tract on John Paul II and noted my persistence. He invited Esther and me to his home for supper, where we were graciously received. His daughters made a fuss over Esther, showering her with chocolate biscuits. During our time there, I shared the full account of my conversion, holding nothing back (see full account elsewhere).

We also spoke of the troubles at Bierton Church—concerning Particular Redemption, Law and Gospel, the Added Articles, and the controversy over the Holy Table. I shared about my role as a lecturer at Luton College and minister of the gospel.

Mr. Metcalfe struck me as a man of principle—decisive, uncompromising, and seemingly determined to follow God. I admired him and felt I could learn much from his example. He was opposed to figures like Dr. Ian Paisley, and he rejected the use of honorary titles such as "Dr.," even disapproving of Dr. John Gill for accepting such.

On a later visit with my wife, we attended a Sunday meeting at Tyler's Green. One of the church members kindly looked after our children while we attended the service. Mr. Metcalfe preached powerfully and eloquently. I later realised the substance of the sermon echoed his publication "Messiah." I was greatly encouraged and excited to share the message with others.

After the sermon, Mr. Metcalfe sought feedback, which I hesitated to give. I felt conflicted—while deeply encouraged, I was wary of praising a preacher in a way that might feed pride. Despite this, I admired his message and sincerity.

Later, I introduced Paul Rowland, a Strict Baptist minister and employee of the Trinitarian Bible Society, to Mr. Metcalfe. Paul was committed to singing only Psalms in worship and held strong Presbyterian convictions. We were invited to Mr. Metcalfe's home one evening.

The setting was elegant—a large lounge that resembled a library, richly decorated. Mr. Metcalfe was dressed in a smart suit.
The setting was elegant—a large lounge that resembled a library, richly decorated. Mr. Metcalfe was dressed in a smart suit.

John Metcalfe spoke about his work and recent publications the ***Psalms, Spiritual Songs, and Hymns of the New Testament***

Songs, Hymns and New Testament Books

The Beautifully Produced Song Books

We spoke about doctrinal matters, especially the righteousness of Christ and justification. Mr. Metcalfe contended that the righteousness of Christ is not mentioned in the New Testament, only the "righteousness of God," and he distinguished this from legal righteousness.

During this visit, he asked a cryptic question about whether the fruit that Adam ate was good or bad, referencing God's declaration that everything He made was "very good." Before I could respond, Mr. Metcalfe dramatically pulled out a shotgun from behind a curtain and removed the cartridges. He claimed this was due to threats from the IRA and said our pockets had been searched—tobacco had apparently been found, and he later made derogatory comments about it.

This episode was extraordinary and prompted much reflection, especially about justification. I had already been contemplating the idea of eternal justification of the elect and the debates between Antinomians and legalists.

In the days that followed, Mr. Metcalfe phoned me—though I mistook him at first for Dr. John Verna and addressed him simply as "John." He corrected me sternly, insisting I refer to him as Mr. Metcalfe. The conversation became strained. He demanded feedback on the sermon and took offence when I hesitated. When I finally voiced concerns about a phrase in his tract, "the merits of Christ's person," he retorted, "Look, mate, I have more theology in my little finger than you would learn in a thousand years," and compared my objections to the blasphemy of the Pharisees.

Troubled by this encounter, I wrote two letters to Mr. Metcalfe during a study week at Durham University, explaining my concerns. In the first, I expressed regret that I would not be meeting him again. I explained that I was exercising discernment and attempting to prove all things, as scripture exhorts. I defended my testimony, which he had dismissed as vile and self-glorifying, and I challenged the doctrinal formulation in his tract. I maintained that persons are communed with—not natures—and that merit cannot rightly be attributed to a divine person. I suggested a more accurate theological phrasing.

In the second letter, I expanded on this point, arguing that while we may speak of the merits of Christ Jesus—his human nature and actions—we cannot speak of the merits of His divine person, for God is inherently righteous and perfect.

Both letters were returned without comment. I took this to mean that Mr. Metcalfe rejected my observations entirely.

David Clarke

Difficulties Associated With Articles Of Religion

Over thirty years after the events at Bierton, I was compelled to write my book Difficulties Associated with Articles of Religion Among Particular Baptists. This work addresses several of the problems I encountered, including the little-known history of the added articles of the Gospel Standard. It also

includes The Doctrine of the Sabbath by Dr. John Prideaux (1642). These publications can be found in the Further Publications section at the end of this book.

Conclusion

From the beginning, it became evident that the church at Bierton treated articles of religion rather loosely. Firstly, they had adopted a spurious set of articles, thus deviating from the tenets laid out in the original Trust Deed. Secondly, when I raised objections, some members suggested I simply overlook the points of disagreement, saying, "After all, these are only man-made rules."

I've sought to demonstrate that the church's alignment with the Gospel Standard cause was largely driven by a subtle yet determined effort on the part of one member—Mrs Evered. The meeting in which the church voted to join the Gospel Standard denomination was not lawfully convened to address that specific issue. The resulting unanimous vote was also misleading. Mrs C. Gurney later revealed that she had felt pressured during the meeting, being made to feel she was the only one holding the church back. Miss R. Ellis also expressed her desire for no changes and was misunderstood during the unorthodox private vote. She later explained she had wished to vote against joining the Gospel Standard cause.

Additionally, I have noted that Mrs Evered denied the term "evangelical repentance" and insisted the Law of Moses remained her rule of life. As a result, I found it necessary to clarify the meaning of Article 26 and highlight the true rest that remains for the people of God.

I included a detailed account titled Mr Royce and the Added Articles (Chapter 18) to show that the issues surrounding Articles 26 and 32 were not new and had long caused difficulty for those with tender consciences.

My full reasoning for leaving the Bierton church is recorded in The Bierton Crisis (1984), which I circulated to those concerned at the time.

It is my hope that this present publication will serve to help "build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down" (Acts 15:16).

According to the strict terms of church membership, I am the sole remaining

member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, since my membership was never formally terminated. Mr Crane confirmed his support for my return to reopen the chapel in 2002 upon the deaths of all the remaining members.

CHAPTER 23: What Next – The Aftermath

The difficulties I faced upon leaving the Bierton church were many, and the impact on myself and my family was severe. I questioned whether I had done the right thing, but I could not have acted otherwise. Churches outside the Gospel Standard were often shallow in their doctrinal convictions, which led us to relocate to Shropshire in hopes of joining a church at Snailbeach. However, I was unable to secure suitable work.

During that time, I felt abandoned and rejected by God, much like King Saul. Depression set in. It was only after we returned to Luton—where I resumed work at Luton College of Higher Education—that I began to recover. We remained cautious and unconnected to any church, wary of repeating the troubles we had endured at Bierton.

While in Luton, I faced fresh challenges at the college. Conflict with management led to my departure, for which I received a financial settlement. I was prescribed medication to help me sleep, which caused my mood to plummet. This resulted in a long period of deep depression, during which the things of God seemed distant, and I fell into temptation.

Eventually, the Lord provided a lecturing post at Fareham College. This required me to live in lodgings while my family remained in Luton until we sold our house 18 months later. During this time, I fell into a backslidden state and committed grievous sin. I sought to justify my actions by denying the existence of God. This led to my wife divorcing me—for just cause.

In my despair, I remembered the gospel. Though I had denied the existence of God, I knew He would not hear the prayer of the wicked unless there was true repentance. I became so desperate that I felt, had there been no God, I would have needed to invent one. It was only when I decided to forsake my sin that God heard my cry and began to restore me.

I could only take in the milk of the Word at first, but gradually, the light of

the gospel returned. Thanks be to God, I began to recover and once again sought Christian fellowship.

Two significant events followed. First, I received word that my brother—who had been imprisoned in the Philippines—had become a Christian. This was a great encouragement. Second, I faced yet another church conflict when a fellowship I joined sought to appoint women elders. When I could not accept this move, I was asked to leave. I responded by writing Mary, Mary Quite Contrary: Does the Lord Jesus Want Women to Rule as Elders in His Church?

This, alongside Converted on LSD Trip, tells the story of my brother and me: our early lives of crime, my conversion and years at Bierton, and my brother's later conversion in prison.

In response to his conversion, I undertook a mission to the Philippines. From 2001 to 2003, I worked with prisoners and religious volunteers to bring gospel help to those seeking to turn from crime to Christ. I spent ten months living in the Philippines and later published Trojan Warriors, a collection of testimonies from 66 former criminals converted to Christ.

The Closure of the Bierton Chapel

Upon returning to the UK in July 2003, I contacted Mr Crane, our church overseer, who informed me that the chapel had been closed for worship on 22nd December 2002. He encouraged me to reopen it. However, the Association of Grace Baptist Churches Ltd. (South East), based in London, had assumed control of the church property. They had taken the Trust Deed from the lawful trustees—Mr Janes, Mr Martin, Mr King, and Mr Baumber—who had all stepped down due to old age.

The Trust Deed had been held with Miss G. Ellis's solicitor, which proved crucial for registration with the Land Registry. The Association retrieved the deed after her death.

When I approached the Association to use the chapel for ministry, they refused. They were planning to sell the building for profit and had even begun demolition works, contrary to the Trust terms. I had already planned to host two Filipino Particular Baptist ministers in the UK that summer, with the chapel as a proposed venue. The Association had no concern for the

wishes of the chapel's original founders or members.

They offered to sell me the building for approximately £150,000, but disputed my right to church membership or use of the property.

CHAPTER 24: My Letter to the Association of Grace Baptist Churches Ltd

To: Association of Grace Baptist Churches Ltd CC: Charities Commission Date: Sunday, 11th July 2004

Dear Sirs,

Re: Trusteeship of the Bierton Chapel

I would be grateful if you could provide evidence of your lawful entitlement to act as trustees for the Bierton Church, founded in 1831.

While the Nonconformist Chapels Act 1844 addresses matters of usage, the Bierton Church was officially listed as a Gospel Standard cause in 1981 by church consent. Only twenty-two years have since passed. The Articles of Religion for the Bierton Chapel remain those contained in the original Trust Deed of 1831.

The church's alignment with the Gospel Standard list was not a deviation from its foundational Articles of Religion. Therefore, it is unlawful to apply the Articles of the Association of Strict Baptists (to which you belong) to the Bierton cause unless such a move was specifically agreed upon by the Bierton Church.

Please provide strict proof of your entitlement to act as trustees and explain how you came to possess the Trust Deeds of the Bierton Baptist Chapel. I must also inform you that the Society of Strict and Particular Baptists continues through my ministry. I believe that we are lawfully entitled to use the Bierton School Room and the enlarged chapel.

We maintain that we constitute the society referenced in the Bierton Trust Deed—the Society of Strict and Particular Baptists, as witnessed in the original indenture. I am one of the original seven members of the Bierton

cause.

As you are no doubt aware, any sale of the chapel would require an application to the Charities Commission for a scheme to apply the proceeds of sale and associated funds cy-près.

I trust this will assist you in making the right decision, should you be the lawful trustees, regarding my request to use the Bierton Chapel for religious worship.

Yours sincerely in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,David ClarkeDirector, Trojan Horse International (TULIP) Phils. IncorporatedC/o Secretary, Dolores A. ClarkeBlk. 5 Lot 45, Pueto Galera, St. Camillia, 4a, Muntinlupa City

To Their Shame

They first denied that the Bierton Church was a Gospel Standard cause and rejected my standing as a member. When I sent them my book, The Bierton Crisis 1984, and letters of confirmation from Mr Ramsbottom and Mr Crane supporting our Gospel Standard affiliation and my request to reopen the chapel, they insisted I was no longer a member.

This ignored the strict rules of membership, which indicate that unless terminated by honourable transfer or dishonourable dismissal (Article 16), membership continues. My membership was never terminated, and Mr Crane confirmed this in writing. I presented this to the Association along with my application to use the chapel.

When I asserted that they were not lawful trustees—since they were never elected by the church—I was ignored. I asked them to confirm whether the copy of the Trust Deed I held matched the one they retrieved from Miss Ellis's solicitor. They refused, knowing the Trust Deed names lawful trustees and lays out their election and duties. Trustees must be elected by the church and must affirm the doctrinal tenets outlined in the Deed.

The Bierton Church, being a Gospel Standard cause, would never have elected trustees associated with the London Baptist 1869 Confession, which the Association upholds. Our church held to different principles.

My Action

I wrote to Mr David Whitmarsh, Secretary of the Association, who denied that the Bierton Church was a Gospel Standard cause or that I remained a member. He was unfamiliar with our rules and refused to provide me with a copy of the Trust Deed.

To prevent an unlawful sale, I registered a caution with the Land Registry. I also made a solemn declaration outlining my claim to church membership despite my resignation in 1984 (which was over matters of conscience and not formal dismissal) and detailed my continued ministry as a sent minister of the Bierton Church in both the Philippines and the UK.

Result of the County Court Case

I agreed to a two-part hearing:

Whether I remained a member of the Bierton Church.

Whether the Association were the lawful trustees.

It was adjudged that our church rules regarding secession of membership were unlawful, as any person has the right to leave an association. The judge was unaware that our Articles only permit membership termination by honourable transfer or dishonourable dismissal—neither of which occurred in my case. According to our rules, I remained a member, but the judge ruled otherwise.

On the second matter, I chose not to pursue the challenge further as it would lead to additional conflict. The Trust Deed clearly states trustees must be elected by the church—and neither I nor any other church members had elected the Association.

Further Action

I wrote to the Strict Baptist Historical Society requesting access to the church minutes. I was told the Bierton church book had been handed to Mr Dix along with other items. I was denied access, even though I wished to verify for myself the church's business records.

The Association claimed Mr Dix had stated the church had terminated my membership—but this was untrue. My request was ignored, and no church

book was provided. The legal case cost me £6,000 in court fees to pay the Association's costs.

I left the matter with the Lord.

Solemn DeclarationMade at the London Central County Court, 6th September 2006.

CHAPTER 24: The Closure Of The Bierton Chapel

The Bierton Chapel

Church Foundation and Closure

The Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists were established as a church in 1831. Their chapel was closed following the final worship service on 22nd December 2002. A facsimile of the original Trust Deed is available and forms a foundational legal document.

On 16th January 1981, the Bierton Church officially became a Gospel Standard cause and adopted the strict rules of practice and conduct associated with the Gospel Standard Articles of Religion.

Further information can be found under the Wikipedia entry titled Bierton Nonconformist Place of Worship.

Doctrinal Controversy and Secession

The church's later years are chronicled in The Bierton Crisis 1984, which documents the secession of its final active member, David Clarke, on 26th

June 1984. This was due to serious doctrinal and practical errors within the church. A copy of this account was sent to the Association of Grace Baptist Churches.

Solemn Declaration and Legal Dispute

David Clarke lodged a solemn declaration with the London Central County Court (Case No. 5PO 00770, dated 6th September 2005), objecting to the Association of Grace Baptist Churches Limited claiming trusteeship over the Bierton Chapel. The declaration argued the Association's actions were unlawful, particularly their intent to sell the chapel.

Summary of Key Events and Evidence

Spurious Articles Identified: In 1976, Clarke discovered discrepancies in the church's Articles of Religion, which differed from the 1831 originals. After investigation, he was admitted into church membership on the basis of the original Articles.

Trustees Appointed: On 2nd July 1976, eleven trustees were appointed in accordance with the 1831 Trust Deed, including Mr. A. King and Mr. Hill (Luton).

Gospel Standard Cause Status: On 16th January 1981, the church agreed to associate with the Gospel Standard group. This was confirmed on 3rd April 1981.

Controversy Over Redemption:

In 1983, doctrinal conflict arose when Mr. King introduced hymns teaching general redemption. Clarke's objections were supported by Mr. Ramsbottom and Mr. Janes.

Secession and Death of Members:

Clarke resigned as secretary and seceded in July 1984. Between then and 1995, all remaining members died. Mr. King never retracted his doctrinal errors.

Mission Work and Philippines Ministry:

Clarke continued mission work in the Philippines, baptising inmates and establishing Trojan Horse International (TULIP) Phils. Incorporated. His ministry was officially recognised by the Bureau of Corrections.

Attempted Reopening of Chapel: Clarke sought to reopen the chapel upon his return to the UK. Mr. Crane, former overseer, supported this, considering Clarke still a member.

Association's Refusal and Sale Attempt:

The Association of Grace Baptist Churches Ltd refused Clarke access, offered the building for sale at £150,000, and sought planning permission to convert it to residential use. Ten church members are buried in the graveyard.

Legal Obstruction and Land Registry Action:

Clarke attempted to register the chapel under his name due to the absence of other living members and irregular transfer of the Trust Deeds. He was denied access to documents and incurred legal costs of £6,000.

Charities Commission and Planning Application: The Association claimed the Charities Commission approved their actions, though Clarke disputed the legitimacy of any inquiry. Planning permission for a single dwelling was granted in 2004.

Conclusion and Continuing Dispute

Clarke asserts that opposition to the Gospel Standard affiliation and doctrinal integrity of the original Articles of Religion underpins the refusal to return the chapel and Trust Deeds to rightful control. He maintains that the chapel's sale proceeds are being diverted to churches not aligned with Gospel Standard principles.

He submitted these matters to the Charities Commission, the Land Registry, and all concerned parties, expressing his desire to restore the chapel's use in accordance with the 1831 Trust Deed.

Declaration

This chapter reproduces Clarke's solemn declaration, certified on 3rd

September 2004 before a qualified solicitor at 12 High Street, Fareham, Hampshire.

Supplementary Material:

Copy of the 1831 Trust Deed

Title documents (BM30453)

List of trustees

Chapel land plan

Contact and Website:
David Clarke11 Hayling Close, Fareham, Hampshire, PO14 3AEWebsite: www.BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk
Email: nbpttc@yahoo.co.uk

Historical Note:
The church, originally built in 1832 and enlarged in 1835, was historically associated with the First London Confession (1644) and distinct from 1689 Confession adherents. The final sent minister was in 1982, and the chapel was closed in 2002. It was sold and converted into a private dwelling by 2006, with the Trust Deeds lodged at HM Land Registry.

CHAPTER 25 : Our Trust Deed Official: Copy

Land Registry

19 March 2012

Your ref
NONE

Our ref
BM304531 /OC/243

Land Registry
Leicester Office
Westbridge Place
Leicester
LE3 5DR

DX 11900 Leicester 5
Tel 0300 006 0003
Fax 0300 006 0023
Email leicester.office@
landregistry.gsi.gov.uk
www.landregistry.gov.uk

Official copy/copies

The official copy/copies of the document(s) you applied for is/are enclosed.

Please contact the Land Registry office named if you have any questions about the enclosed official copy/copies.

The fee taken for this application is £12.00.

NONE

MR D CLARKE
11
HAYLING CLOSE
FAREHAM
HAMPSHIRE
PO14 3AW

Land Registry
Leicester Office

David Clarke
11 Hayling Close
Fareham
Hampshire
PO14 3AE

Sent by e-mail

Email sent to:
nbpttc@yahoo.co.uk

Date
16 December 2011

Your ref
0

Our ref
BM304531/A/176/MT/CCT

Title number **BM304531**

Property **Bierton Baptist Chapel, 142a Aylesbury Road, Bierton (HP22 5DT)**

Dear Mr Clarke

Thank you for your e-mail enquiry of 11th December 2011.

I have provided the information requested in the order presented to us:

1) We do hold a record of the original caution title registered in your favour under title number BM295201. The title is of course closed as you are aware.
2) The documents held in connection with the first registration of the Chapel are the application form (FR1) dated 21st September 2005, document list (form DL) and item number 4 on that list being described as a Transcription of the Foundation Deed of Brieton Chapel executed on 25th February 1832.
3) We do not hold any of the original deeds or documents.
4) Presumably the documents enclosed with application form FR1 on form DL. I cannot comment further as the documents (with the exception of the Transcription mentioned above) were returned to the applicant.
5) Access to the above mentioned documents involves an inspection fee that is one and the same as purchasing official copies from us. The latter therefore is the simpler option. Forms FR1 and DL can be purchased by written postal application for a single fee of £12, and the Transcription for an additional fee of £12. Cheques should be made payable to 'Land Registry'.

I trust the above information is helpful.

Land Registry
Leicester Office
Westbridge Place
Leicester LE3 5DR

DX 11900 Leicester 5

Tel 0116 265 4000
Fax 0116 2654 008
leicester.office
@landregistry.gsi.gov.uk

www.landregistry.gov.uk

Transcription of the Foundation Deed of Bierton Chapel. Executed on the 25th February 1832 by William Bonham and others.

Land Registry
Official Copy
This copy may not be the same size as the original.

Notes on the Transcription

The three pages of the Deed are bound in reverse order along the lower edge.

(1) Where the correct reading of a word or proper name is in doubt this has been indicated by enclosing the word in square brackets with a question mark. Square brackets have also been used to comment on the text and indicate illegible marks.

Brown Cooper Monier-Williams Solicitors, of 71 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, WC2A 3JF, Solicitors, certify that, except where specifically indicated pursuant to note (1) above, this transcription is a true and accurate copy of the original.

..... Date 19.9.05

[In the left hand margin on each page of the Indenture there is affixed a blue impressed stamp saying "ONE POUND" under a coat of arms. Beneath that is a round stamp with a crown in the middle reading around the edge "BUCKINGHAM 18.10.30".]

THIS INDENTURE made the 25th day of February in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and thirty two BETWEEN WILLIAM BONHAM late of Wilstone in the Parish of Tring in the County of Hertford and now of Bierton in the County of Bucks Bricklayer of the first part JOSEPH ROSE of Aylesbury in the said County of Bucks Gentleman a trustee for the said William Bonham of the second part ROBERT DELL of the same place Wine Merchant (in whom as surviving executor of the last Will and Testament of John Parker late of the same place Gentleman the hereditaments hereinafter particularly mentioned and described and intended to be hereby bargained and sold are now vested for the residue of a satisfied trust term of one thousand years) of the third part and WILLIAM BELL Farmer THOMAS ELLIOTT Butcher THOMAS BONHAM Bricklayer JAMES BONHAM Bricklayer

First registration application

Land Registry
Official Copy
This copy may not be the same
Size as the original.

Land Registry

FR1

If you need more room than is provided in a panel, use continuation sheet CS and attach to this form.

1. Administrative area and postcode if known

2. Address or other description of the estate to be registered

Baptist Chapel, Aylesbury Road, Bierton, Bucks. HP22 5DN

On registering a rentcharge, profit a prendre in gross, or franchise, show the address as follows:- "Rentcharge, franchise etc, over 2 The Grove, Anytown, Northshire NE2 9OO".

3. Extent to be registered *Place "X" in the appropriate box and complete as necessary.*

☐ The land is clearly identified on the plan to the _____
Enter nature and date of deed.

☒ The land is clearly identified on the attached plan and shown edged red
Enter reference e.g. "edged red".

☐ The description in panel 2 is sufficient to enable the land to be clearly identified on the Ordnance Survey map

When registering a rentcharge, profit a prendre in gross or franchise, the land to be identified is the land affected by that estate, or to which it relates.

4. Application, priority and fees *A fee calculator for all types of applications can be found on Land Registry's website at www.landregistry.gov.uk/fees*

Nature of applications **in priority order** | Value/premium £ | Fees paid £150

1. **First registration of the estate**
2.
3.
4.

TOTAL £

Fee payment method: *Place "X" in the appropriate box.*

I wish to pay the appropriate fee payable under the current Land Registration Fee Order:

☐ by cheque or postal order, amount £ _____ made payable to "Land Registry".

☐ by Direct Debit under an authorised agreement with Land Registry.

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Record of fees paid

Particulars of under/over payments

Fees debited £

Reference number

5. The title applied for is *Place "X" in the appropriate box.*

☒ absolute freehold ☐ absolute leasehold ☐ good leasehold ☐ possessory freehold
☐ possessory leasehold

6. Documents lodged with this form *List the documents on Form DL. We shall assume that you request the return of these documents. But we shall only assume that you request the return of a statutory declaration, subsisting lease, subsisting charge or the latest document of title (for example, any conveyance to the applicant) if you supply a certified copy of the document. If certified copies of such documents are not supplied, we may retain the originals of such documents and they may be destroyed.*

7. The applicant is: *Please provide the full name of the person applying to be registered as the proprietor.*

Application lodged by: ASSOCIATION OF GRACE BAPTIST CHURCHES LIMITED
Land Registry Key No.(if appropriate) 0009605S
Name (if different from the applicant)
Address/DX No. 7 ARLINGTON WAY, LONDON EC1R1XA

Reference
E-mail david@ngbc.se.org.uk
Telephone No. 020 7278 1225 | Fax No. 020 7278 3598

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
Status codes

8. Where you would like us to deal with someone else *We shall deal only with the applicant, or the person lodging the application if different, unless you place "X" against one or more of the statements below and give the necessary details.*

- ☐ Send title information document to the person shown below
- ☐ Raise any requisitions or queries with the person shown below
- ☐ Return original documents lodged with this form (see note in panel 6) to the person shown below
  If this applies only to certain documents, please specify.

Name
Address/DX No.

Reference
E-mail

Telephone No.	Fax No.

9. Address(es) for service of every owner of the estate. The address(es) will be entered in the register and used for correspondence and the service of notice. *In this and panel 10, you may give up to three addresses for service* ***one*** *of which* ***must*** *be a postal address but does not have to be within the UK. The other addresses can be any combination of a postal address, a box number at a UK document exchange or an electronic address. For a company include the company's registered number, if any. For Scottish companies, use an SC prefix, and for limited liability partnerships, use an OC prefix before the registered number if any. For foreign companies give territory in which incorporated.*

Unless otherwise arranged with Land Registry headquarters, we require a certified copy of the owner's constitution (in English or Welsh) if it is a body corporate but is not a company registered in England or Wales or Scotland under the Companies Acts.

10. Information in respect of a chargee or mortgagee *Do not give this information if a Land Registry MD reference is printed on the charge, unless the charge has been transferred.*

Full name and address (including postcode) for service of notices and correspondence of the person entitled to be registered as proprietor of each charge. *You may give up to three addresses for service; see panel 9 as to the details you should include.*

N/A.

Unless otherwise arranged with Land Registry headquarters, we require a certified copy of the chargee's constitution (in English or Welsh) if it is a body corporate but is not a company registered in England and Wales or Scotland under the Companies Acts.

11. Where the applicants are joint proprietors *Place "X" in the appropriate box*

- ☐ The applicants are holding the property on trust for themselves as joint tenants
- ☐ The applicants are holding the property on trust for themselves as tenants in common in equal shares
- ☐ The applicants are holding the property *(complete as necessary)*

12. Disclosable overriding interests *Place "X" in the appropriate box.*

- ☐ No disclosable overriding interests affect the estate
- ☐ Form DI accompanies this application

Rule 28 of the Land Registration Rules 2003 sets out the disclosable overriding interests that you must tell us about. You must use Form DI to tell us about any disclosable overriding interests that affect the estate.

The registrar may enter a notice of a disclosed interest in the register of title.

13. The title is based on the title documents listed in Form DL which are all those that are in the possession or control of the applicant.

Place "X" in the appropriate box. If applicable complete the second statement; include any interests disclosed only by searches other than local land charges. Any interests disclosed by searches which do not affect the estate being registered should be certified.

☒ All rights, interests and claims affecting the estate known to the applicant are disclosed in the title documents and Form DI if accompanying this application. There is no-one in adverse possession of the property or any part of it.

☐ In addition to the rights, interests and claims affecting the estate disclosed in the title documents or Form DI if accompanying this application, the applicant only knows of the following:

14. *Place "X" in this box if you are NOT able to give this certificate.* ☐

We have fully examined the applicant's title to the estate, including any appurtenant rights, or are satisfied that it has been fully examined by a conveyancer in the usual way prior to this application.

15. We have authority to lodge this application and request the registrar to complete the registration.

16. **Signature of applicant or ~~their conveyancer~~** David S. Whitbourn (Secretary) **Date** 21.9.05.

Note: Failure to complete the form with proper care may deprive the applicant of protection under the Land Registration Act if, as a result, a mistake is made in the register.

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List of documents
Please complete in duplicate.

Land Registry
Official Copy
This copy may not be the same
Size as the original.

Land Registry

DL

1. Property

Baptist Chapel, Aylesbury Road, Bierton, Bucks. HP22 5DN

2. Documents lodged

Notes (a) The first column is for official use only. If the Registry places an asterisk "" in this column, it shows that we have kept that document.*
(b) Number the documents in sequence; copies should also be numbered and listed as separate documents.
(c) If you supply the original document and a certified copy, we shall assume that you request the return of the original; if a certified copy is not supplied, we may retain the original document and it may be destroyed. For first registration applications, see the note in panel 6 of Form FR1.

OFFICIAL USE ONLY[a]	Item No.[b]	Date	Document [c]	Parties
✓	1	25/02/1832	**Foundation Trust Deed** of Bierton Baptist Church	William Bonham, Joseph Rose, Robert Dell and William Bell etc. (Trustees of Bierton Baptist Chapel)
✓	2	13/12/1880 (on rear of page two of 1832 Deed)	**Memorandum of the Choice & Appointment of New Trustees**	Thomas Bonham, James Jefferary etc.
✓	3	11/12/1929 (on rear of page one of 1832 Deed)	**Memorandum of the Choice & Appointment of New Trustees**	George E C King, John Roberts etc.
*	4	19/09/2005	**Certified Copy of the above Deeds**	Transcribed by Brown Cooper Monier-Williams Solicitors.
✓	5	24/04/1907	**Trust Deed** of Bierton Baptist Schoolrooms & toilets	Abel Dearing and Thomas Todd etc. (Trustees of Bierton Baptist Chapel, Schoolrooms & Toilets)
✓	6	25/03/1977	**Copy of the Memorandum of the Choice & Appointment of New Trustees**	Percy Gurney, Sidney White, Percy Foster, P C Janes, T D S Martin, D Baumber, F H Hill, J A Heather, J Hill, A V King

OFFICIAL USE ONLY[a]	Item No.[b]	Date	Document [c]	Parties
✓	7	05/02/2003	**Memorandum of the Choice & Appointment of New Trustees** (AGBC Ltd)	Association of Grace Baptist Churches Ltd.
✓	8	17/03/2005	**History of Trustees** (since 25/05/1832)	From William Bell to AGBC Ltd. (Extracted from the Minutes of the Members' Meetings of Bierton Baptist Church).
✓	9	21/09/2005	**Summary of Case re. David Clarke's claim to be a member of Bierton Baptist Church**	David Clarke gave an undertaking to the Court to remove all the Cautions he had lodged at the Land Registry (regarding this property) before 16.00hrs on 20/09/2005.

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If you would like to discuss this correspondence or require it in an alternative format please contact me, quoting our reference.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Temple
Direct line 0116 202 2284

CHAPTER 26 : Our Trust Deed: The Indenture

WILLIAM BONHAM the younger Tailor WILLIAM DICKINS Farmer WILLIAM RODWELL Labourer DAVID PRICE Labourer JAMES JEFFREY Labourer and WILLIAM PARKER Labourer all of Bierton aforesaid JAMES HENRY MARSHALL Bookseller JOSEPH FREEMAN Tile Maker SAMUEL BROCKLEHURST Gardener JOHN GUNN Grocer AUGUSTUS LINUS Grocer and THOMAS REYNOLDS Taylor all of Aylesbury aforesaid and WILLIAM WOOLLHEAD of Hardwick in the said County of Bucks Gentleman of the fourth part WHEREAS the said parties hereto of the fourth part have contracted with the said William Bonham Bricklayer for the absolute purchase of the land and hereditaments hereinafter particularly mentioned and described and intended to be hereby bargained and sold in manner and for the purposes hereinafter in that behalf mentioned and the fee simple and inheritance thereof in possession free from encumbrances for the sum of one pound one shilling NOW THEREFORE THIS INDENTURE WITNESSETH that in pursuance of the said recited contract and agreement and for and in consideration of the sum of one pound one shilling of lawful money of Great Britain to the said William Bonham Bricklayer in hand well and truly paid by the said several above named parties hereto of the fourth part at or before the sealing and delivering of the these presents the payment and receipt whereof the said William Bonham Bricklayer doth hereby acknowledge and thereof and therefrom and of and from every part thereof doth hereby acquit release and discharge them the said several parties hereto of the fourth part and each of them there and each of their heirs cestuique trust executors administrators and assigns for ever AND ALSO in consideration of the sum of five shillings of like lawful money to the said Joseph Rose and Robert Dell in hand also paid by the said parties hereto of the fourth part at or before the execution hereof the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged they the said Joseph Rose and Robert Dell according to their respective estates and interest in the premises and at the request and by the direction of the said William Bonham Bricklayer testified as aforesaid HAVE and each of them HATH bargained and sold and by these presents DO and each of them DOTH bargain and sell and the said William Bonham Bricklayer HATH granted bargained sold aliened released and confirmed and by this present deed indented sealed and delivered in the presence of two credible witnesses and intended to be forthwith inrolled in His Majesty's High Court of Chancery DOTH grant bargain sell alien release and confirm unto the said William Bell Thomas Elliott Thomas Bonham James Bonham William Bonham the younger William Dickins

2

William Rodwell David Price James Jeffrey William Parker James Henry Marshall Joseph Freeman Samuel Brocklehurst John Gunn Augustus Linus Thomas Reynolds and William Woollhead parties hereto of the fourth part their heirs and assigns ALL that plot or piece of land parcel of a pightle orchard or house close of inclosed Ground lately pasture ground situate in the Parish of Bierton aforesaid in the said County of Bucks adjoining or belonging to a messuage or tenement formerly divided in to and used as two cottages or tenements heretofore in the several tenures or occupations of Thomas Cripps and William Parker afterwards of William Bowden and Barnard Rodwell since of Thomas [Impey?] or his undertenants or assigns since with some additions and alterations converted into and used as four tenements and in the several occupations of Barnard Rodwell John Godd Thomas Wiggins and Anne Capell and which with subsequent additions now consist of six tenements in the several tenures or occupations of George Rodding William Brandom Elizabeth Wallace Widow Sarah French Widow Thomas Collins and himself the said William Bonham Bricklayer and which plot or piece of land is bounded on the south side by the turnpike road leading through Bierton aforesaid on the east and north by other parts of the said pightle orchard or close and on the west by the scites and ground belonging to other cottages or tenements built by the said William Bonham Bricklayer on other part of the said pightle orchard or close and contains in width at the south end thereof twenty seven feet or thereabouts and at the north end thereof twenty five feet or thereabouts and in length on the east side thereof sixty seven feet or thereabouts and on the west side thereof sixty eight feet or thereabouts as the same is now set out and divided from the remainder of the premises by a Brick wall and part of a foot path on each side thereof together with the fences on all sides of the said plot or piece of land and all ways waters watercourses hedges ditches trees walls fences mounds easements commodities and advantages emoluments hereditaments rights members and appurtenances whatsoever to the said land and premises hereby bargained and sold or intended so to be belonging or in any wise appertaining and the reversion and various remainder and remainders yearly and other rents issues and profits thereof and every part thereof AND ALSO all the estate right title interest use trust inheritance possession benefit property possibility claim and demand whatsoever both at law and equity of them the said William Bonham Bricklayer Joseph Rose and Robert Dell and of each of them of into and out of the said land hereditaments and premises hereby bargained and sold or intended so to be and every part thereof TO HAVE AND TO

HOLD the said land hereditaments and all and singular other the premises hereby bargained and sold or intended so to be and every part thereof with the appurtenances unto the said William Bell Thomas Elliott Thomas Bonham James Bonham William Bonham the younger William Dickins William Rodwell David Price James Jeffrey William Parker James Henry Marshall Joseph Freeman Samuel Brocklehurst John Gunn Augustus Linus Thomas Reynolds and William Woollhead parties hereto of the fourth part their heirs and assigns TO the use and behoof of them the said William Bell Thomas Elliott Thomas Bonham James Bonham William Bonham the younger William Dickins William Rodwell David Price James Jeffrey William Parker James Henry Marshall Joseph Freeman Samuel Brocklehurst John Gunn Augustus Linus Thomas Reynolds and William Woollhead parties hereto of the fourth part their heirs and assigns forever UPON THE TRUSTS nevertheless and to and for the intents and purposes hereinafter expressed and declared that is to say upon trust to permit a Chapel or meeting house and other offices to be erected built and completed and from time to time repaired re-erected and re-built upon the said land and to permit the Chapel or meeting house thereon for the time being to be from time to time and at all times hereafter dedicated used and enjoyed as a place of Public Religious Worship by the Society or congregation of Protestant Dissenters called Particular Baptists and Independents who shall assemble thereat and maintain the doctrines commonly known as Calvinistic and by such other persons as shall thereafter be united, to the said Society and attend the worship of God at such Chapel or meeting House and for that purpose to permit to officiate in the said chapel or meeting house such person or persons of the denomination of Protestant Dissenters called Particular Baptists and Independents as the major part of the adult MEMBERS of the said Society being Communicants therein shall at any church meeting duly assembled for that purpose from time to time elect to officiate as their Minister or Pastor therein according to the usual order and custom of societies of Protestant Dissenters of the Denomination aforesaid which person or persons so from time to time elected as Minister or Pastor of the said society shall continue such Minister or Pastor only so long as and no longer than the major part in number of the adult members of the said society being Communicants therein shall think fit and to permit any part of the offices or buildings on the said land to be used with and be appendant to the said Chapel or Meeting House as a vestry room or otherwise to be taken for the enlargement of the said chapel or meeting house as occasion may require AND UPON FURTHER TRUST as to such

part of the said land as shall be more than sufficient for the scite of the said Chapel or Meeting House and offices with their appendages to permit and suffer the same from time to time and at all times hereafter to be used and occupied as and for a Burial Ground or place of interment for the bodies of the members of the said society or Congregation and of such other persons as the major part of the adult Members of the said Society being Communicants therein shall from time to time think fit and allow to be there intered AND UPON FURTHER TRUST from time to time if and when thereto required by the adult Male Members being Communicants of the said Society or Congregation for the time being in their Church meeting duly assembled or the major part in number of them so assembled to raise such sum or sums of money as they or the major part of them so assembled shall direct by mortgage of the said premises and thereupon to demise or release and convey the said premises for that purpose and to stand possessed of the money which from time to time shall be received for any such mortgage UPON TRUST to lay out and dispose of the same in such manner and for such purposes for the benefit for the said Society or for the Improvement of the trust property or the enlargement, repair or rebuilding of the premises or otherwise as the major part in number of the adult members of the said society being communicants therein as aforesaid and present at a Meeting to be called for that purpose shall from time to time direct but in case the said Society or Congregation of Particular Baptists and independents shall be totally dissolved or dispersed and the public worship of the said Chapel or meeting house be discontinued by them for the space of twelve calendar months together THEN UPON FURTHER TRUST to let convey or otherwise dispose of the said Chapel or Meeting House and premises to such person or persons for such term in such manner and for such purposes either Religious or Civil as the Managers for the time being of a Society called "The Particular Baptist Fund" established in London in One thousand seven hundred and seventeen shall from time to time direct or appoint of or concerning the same PROVIDED ALWAYS that in case any mortgage sale or other disposition of all or any part of the said premises shall at any time be made or any letting thereof shall take place in pursuance of the Trusts aforesaid the person or persons becoming a purchaser or purchasers or mortgagee or mortgagees or otherwise paying any money in respect of the said premises his, her or their heirs, executors or administrators shall not be compelled to see to the application of the money so by him, her or them paid nor be answerable or accountable for the misapplication or nonapplication of the same

5

Election Of Trustees

or any part thereof and that the receipt or receipts which shall from time to time or at any time or times be given by the trustee or trustees for the time being for such purchase, mortgage or other monies or any part thereof shall be a good valid and sufficient acquittance and discharge and good valid and sufficient acquittances and discharges for the sum or sums of money which shall therein be acknowledged to have been received PROVIDED ALSO and it is hereby agreed and declared that when and so often during the continuance of the trusts hereby created as the number of the trustees shall by death or otherwise be reduced to five or less and so from time to time as often as there shall be not more than five trustees for the purposes aforesaid or oftener if the adult members of the said Society or congregation shall think it expedient so many other persons being Protestant Dissenters by profession shall be named and chosen to be Trustees of the said premises as shall make the number of 15 trustees at the least such Trustees to be from time to time nominated appointed or chosen by the adult members of the said society or the major part of them for that purpose duly assembled by Public Notice in their Church meeting and upon every such choice the continuing trustees or trustee for the time being or the heirs of the then last surviving Trustee shall by sufficient conveyances and assurances in the law convey and assure the said land Chapel or Meeting house and premises with the appurtenances to such new trustees so to be appointed as aforesaid so and in such manner as that the same may become legally and effectually vested in such new trustees only or in such new trustees and the continuing trustees or any of them as the case may require upon such or the like Trusts and to and for such or the like interests and purposes as are hereinbefore declared and expressed concerning the same AND the said Robert Dell for himself his heirs executors and administrators and for his own acts only AND the said Joseph Rose for himself his heirs executors and administrators and for his own acts only so hereby severally covenant and declare with and to the said parties hereto of the fourth part their heirs and assigns that they the said Robert Dell and Joseph Rose have not nor have either of them at any time heretofore made done committed executed occasioned or knowingly suffered any act deed matter or thing whatsoever whereby or by reason or by means whereof the said land hereditaments and premises hereby bargained and sold or intended so to be or any part thereof are is can shall or may be in any wise impeached charged affected or incumbered in title estate interest or otherwise howsoever AND the said William Bonham Bricklayer for himself his heirs executors administrators and assigns doth

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hereby covenant promise and agree to and with the said parties hereto of the fourth part their heirs and assigns in manner following that is to say that (for and notwithstanding any act deed matter or thing whatsoever by him the said William Bonham Bricklayer or any trustee for him made done committed executed occasioned or knowingly suffered to the contrary) he the said William Bonham Bricklayer either alone or together with the said Joseph Rose and Robert Dell now at the time of or immediately before the sealing and delivering of these presents is and stands or was and stood so seised of and in the said land hereditaments and premises hereby bargained and sold or intended so to be as to have good right full power and lawful and absolute authority to grant bargain and sell the same AND every part thereof with the appurtenances unto and to the use of the said parties hereto of the fourth part their heirs and assigns for ever in manner and upon the trusts aforesaid and according to the true intent and meaning of those presents AND ALSO that it shall and may be lawful for them the same parties their heirs and assigns from time to time and at all times for ever hereafter peaceably and quietly to enter into and upon and to have hold use occupy possess and enjoy the said land hereditaments and premises hereby bargained and sold or intended so to be and to receive and take the rents issues and profits thereof and of every part thereof to and for their use and benefit as such Trustees as aforesaid without any let suit eviction ejection molestation hindrance or interruption whatsoever of from or by him the said William Bonham Bricklayer his heirs or assigns or of from by or through any other person or persons whomsoever having or legally or equitably claiming or who shall or may have or legally or equitably claim any estate right title or interest whatsoever of in to or out of the said land hereditaments and premises or any part thereof by from through under or in trust for him or them in any manner howsoever and that free and clear and freely and clearly and absolutely acquitted exonerated released and discharged or otherwise by the said William Bonham Bricklayer his heirs executors or administrators well and sufficiently saved defended kept harmless and indemnified of from and against all and all manner of former and other gifts grants estates titles troubles charges and incumbrances whatsoever at any time or times heretofore had made done committed executed occasioned or knowingly suffered by the said William Bonham Bricklayer or any other person or persons whomsoever by his act means or privity AND FURTHER that he the said William Bonham Bricklayer and his heirs and any other person having or legally or equitably claiming or who shall or may have or legally or equitably claim

any estate, right, title or interest of in to or out of the said land hereditament and premises hereby bargained and sold or intended so to be or any part thereof by from through under or in trust for him in any manner howsoever shall and will from time to time and at all times hereafter upon every reasonable request and at the proper costs and charges in all things of them the said parties hereto of the fourth part their heirs or assigns make do acknowledge levy suffer and execute or cause and procure to be made done acknowledged levied suffered and executed all such further and other lawful and reasonable acts deeds devices conveyances and assurances in the law whatsoever for the better more perfectly and absolutely or satisfactorily granting releasing and conveying of the said land hereditament and all and singular other the premises hereby bargained and sold or intended so to be with the appurtenances unto and to the use of the said parties hereto of the fourth part their heirs and assigns for ever upon the trusts aforesaid as by the same parties their heirs or assigns or their counsel in the law shall be reasonably advised or devised and required AND LASTLY that for the making out shewing maintaining and defending the title and interest of the said parties hereto of the fourth part their heirs and assigns in or to all or any part of the hereditaments hereby bargained and sold or intended so to be he the said William Bonham Bricklayer his heirs or assigns shall and will from time to time and at all times hereafter (unless prevented by fire or other inevitable accident) upon every reasonable request and at the proper costs and charges of them the said parties hereto of the fourth part their heirs or assigns or any of them produce and shew forth or cause or procure to be produced and shewn forth to them or to their agent attorney or Solicitor or to such other person or persons as they shall direct desire or require or at any trial hearing or examination in any Court of law or equity or other judicature or upon the execution of any commission or otherwise in England as occasion shall require and permit to be perused examined inspected or given in evidence the several deeds evidences and writings specified in the schedule hereunder written and every or any of them and at the like request costs and charges make and deliver or cause to be made and delivered unto the said parties hereto of the fourth part their heirs or assigns attested or other copies or abstracts of or extracts from all and and every or any of the same deeds evidences and writings and permit such copies abstracts or extracts to be examined and compared with the originals by any person or persons whom they or any of them may appoint.

IN WITNESS whereof the said parties to these presents have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

THE SCHEDULE to which the above written indenture refers

1773	October 28th	Indenture between John Cripps of Bierton in the County of Bucks Yeoman (therein further described) of the one part and John Perkins of Aylesbury in the said County of Bucks Gentleman of the other part
1800	March 19th	Indenture between Thomas Gripps of the Parish of Chopping Wickham in the said County of Bucks Labourer therein further described on the one part and Henry Stratford of Penn in the said County Baker of the other part
1802	June 11th & 12th	Indentures of Lease and Release the Release between the said Thomas Cripps of the first part the said Henry Stratford of the second part Daniel Lathwell of Aylesbury aforesaid Gentleman therein further described of the third part Thomas Capp of Grafton in the Parish of Wing in the said County of Bucks Carpenter of the fourth part and John Parker of Aylesbury aforesaid Gentleman of the fifth part
1802	October 30th	Indenture between the said Thomas Capp of the one part and Noah Gaddesdon of Aylesbury aforesaid Baker of the other part
1803	August 5th & 6th	Indentures of Lease and Release between the said Thomas Capp of the one part and Thomas Woodman of Bierton aforesaid Baker of the other part

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1813	October21st & 22nd	Indentures of Lease and Release the Release between the said Thomas Woodman of the one part and the said William Bonham Bricklayer and Joseph Rose of the other part
1813	October 23rd	Indenture between the same William Bonham Bricklayer of the first part the said Joseph Rose of the second part Thomas Dell of Aylesbury aforesaid Gentleman and William [Rickford?] of the same place Banker therein further described of the third part and the said Thomas Woodman of the fourth part
1818	January 10th	Indenture between the said Thomas Woodman of the one part and the said William Bonham Bricklayer and Joseph Rose of the other part

[Signed and Sealed]
William Bonham Bricklayer, Joseph Rose, R Dell, William Bell, John Elliott, Thomas Bonham, James Bonham, W Bonham junr, William Dickens, William Bradnell, the mark of David Price, James Jeffery, William Parker, J H Marshall, Joseph Freeman, Samuel Brocklehurst, John Gunn, Augustus Linus, [Thomas Reynolds?] and William Woollhead.

[In margin of last page]
taken and acknowledged by William Bonham Bricklayer the party hereto of the first part at Aylesbury in the County of Bucks this twenty eighth day of July One thousand eight hundred and thirty two Before me James James a master [illegible?] in Chancery

[MEMORANDA ENDORSED]

[Stamp Ten Shillings Impressed]

MEMORANDUM of the choice and appointment of new Trustees of the Particular Baptist Chapel situate adjoining main Road in the Parish of Bierton in the County of

Buckingham at a meeting duly convened and held for that purpose at the Particular Baptist Chapel aforesaid on the 13th day of December 1880 Thomas Todd Chairman

Names and description of all Trustees on the constitution or last appointment of Trustees made the 25th day of February 1832

William Bell Farmer Thomas Elliott Butcher Thomas Bonham Bricklayer James Bonham Bricklayer William Bonham the younger Tailor William Dickins Farmer William Rodwell Labourer David Price Labourer James Jeffrey Labourer and William Parker Labourer all of Bierton and James Henry Marshall Book seller Joseph Freeman Pilomaker Samuel Brocklehurst Gardener John Gunn Grocer Augustus Linus Grocer & Thomas Reynolds Tailor all of Aylesbury and William Woolhead of Hardwick Gentleman

Names and Descriptions of all the Trustees in whom the said Chapel and Premises now Become Legally Vested

1st Old Continuing Trustees

Thomas Bonham Bricklayer and James Jeffrey Labourer both of Bierton.

2 New Trustees now chosen and appointed

[Fleet?] Bonham Bricklayer Thomas Todd Baker Thomas Bonham junior Bricklayer Thomas Norwood Butcher James King Coal dealer James Bonham Butcher Thomas Todd junior, Baker George Dickins Labourer Abel Dearing, Labourer and George King [*superscript* E – C] Bricklayer all of Bierton and Henry James Lester Coach builder Edwin North Aerated water manufacturer John Turner Chemist William Hopcroft Grocer Henry Gunn Miller and John Willison Gentleman all of Aylesbury and George Butcher of Tring Banker and John Roberts Stableman of Bierton

Dated this 13th day of December 1880

[Signed] Thomas Todd Chairman of the said meeting

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Signed Sealed and Delivered by the
said Thomas Todd as Chairman of the said
Meeting at and in the presence of the
said Meeting on the day and year aforesaid in the
presence of

[Signed] James Bonham
[Signed] Thomas Norwood

[Stamp Ten Shillings Impressed]

Memorandum of the choice and appointment of new trustees of the Particular Baptist Chapel situate adjoining the Main Road in the Parish of Bierton in the County of Buckingham at a meeting duly convened by Public Notice on the 8th day of December 1929 and held for that purpose in the Chapel aforesaid on the 11th day of December 1929.

[Signed] W. A. Chapman. Chairman.

Names and Descriptions of all Trustees on the last appointment of Trustees made the 13th day of December 1880;-

Thomas Bonham of Bierton aforesaid, Bricklayer
James Jeffrey of Bierton aforesaid, Labourer
[Fleet?] Bonham of Bierton aforesaid, Bricklayer
Thomas Todd of Bierton aforesaid, Baker

Names and Descriptions of all Trustees in whom the said Chapel and Premises now become legally vested:-

FIRST: Old continuing Trustees –

George Esau Chapman King formerly of Bierton and now of Aylesbury, Bricklayer

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Thomas Bonham the younger of Bierton aforesaid, Bricklayer
Thomas Norwood of Bierton aforesaid, Butcher
James King of Bierton aforesaid, Coal dealer
James Bonham of Bierton aforesaid, Butcher
Thomas Todd the younger of Bierton aforesaid, Baker
George Dickins of Bierton aforesaid, Labourer
Abel Dearing of Bierton aforesaid, Labourer
George Esau Chapman King of Bierton aforesaid, Bricklayer
Henry James Lester of Aylesbury, Bucks, Coach builder
Edwin North of Aylesbury aforesaid, Aerated water manufacturer
John Turner of Aylesbury aforesaid, Chemist
William Hopcroft of Aylesbury aforesaid, Grocer
Henry Gunn of Aylesbury aforesaid, Miller
John Willison of Aylesbury aforesaid, Gentleman
George Butcher of Tring, Herts, Banker
John Roberts of Bierton aforesaid, Stableman
John Roberts formerly of Bierton and now of Aylesbury, Stableman

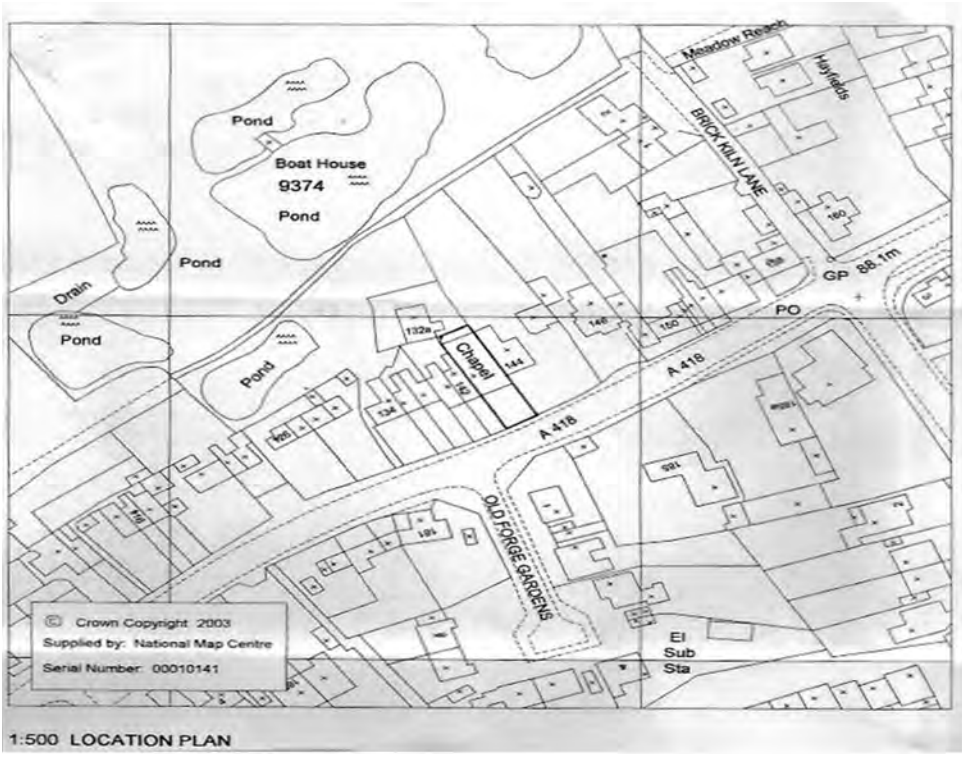
SECOND: New Trustees now chosen and appointed –

Ernest Thorne, Batchelor of Lee Common, Bucks, Gentleman
Alfred Henry Brooks of Fools Gray, Kent, Basket maker
William Arthur Chapman of Aylesbury, Bucks, retired Accountant
William Figg of Waddesdon, Bucks, House Decorator
Bernard Fleet of Bierton, Bucks, Bricklayer
Percy George Foster of Bierton, Bucks, Engineer's miller
Percy Gurney of Bierton, Bucks, Bricklayer
William James Holt of Wickham Marsh, Bucks, Chair maker
Ellis King of Bierton, Bucks, Farmer
Frederick George King of St Albans, Herts, Schoolmaster
Raymond Thomas King of Southall, Middlesex, Motor garage proprietor
William John Markham of Bierton, Bucks, Builder
Samuel David Pierce of Lee Common, Bucks, Fruit grower
William Charles Plail of Tottenham, Middlesex, Baptist Minister

Inrolled in His Majesty's High Court of Chancery the 30th day of July in the year of our Lord 1832 being first duly stampt according to the tenor of the statutes made for that purpose

B.P.E. –
[Signed] [D. Duny?]

Plan View Of The Bierton Chapel In Bierton



Where Did the Money Go From the Sale of Our Chapel?

According to the Trust Deed, the proceeds from the sale of our chapel were to be directed to The Particular Baptists Fund, London 1717—not to The Association of Grace Baptist Churches. However, upon contacting the Fund, I was informed that I was not eligible to receive any support, as they only aid ministries within the United Kingdom and not overseas.

What are your thoughts on this?
https://www.pbfund.org.uk/history.html
The Secretary
Particular Baptist Fund
5 Sandalwood Road
Westbury
Wiltshire
BA13 3UP
By telephone: 01373 825605
By e-mail: info@pbfund.org.uk

FURTHER PUBLICATIONS

LET CHRISTIAN MEN BE MEN

David Clarke

Originally published as *The Bierton Crisis (1984)*, this deeply personal and theological account traces the journey of David Clarke—minister, church secretary, and committed member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, a historic Gospel Standard cause founded in 1832.

This book documents a significant crisis that shook the foundation of the Bierton Church in 1984. As doctrinal errors and questionable practices crept into the fellowship, David stood firm in proclaiming the doctrines of grace—particularly Particular Redemption—and affirmed that the gospel of Christ, not the Law of Moses, is the believer's rule of life. His stance led to a withdrawal of fellowship, yet the church never terminated his membership, desiring his return.

David's testimony not only exposes the theological and ecclesiastical struggles within the church but also chronicles the unexpected closure of the Bierton chapel in 2002, while he was engaged in gospel mission work in the Philippines. Upon returning to the UK, he discovered that a new, unelected group of trustees had taken control of the chapel, denied his rightful membership, and ultimately sold the historic building as a domestic

property in 2006.

This book is both a warning and a call: a warning against doctrinal compromise and a call for ministers and believers to ground their faith and practice in Scripture alone—not tradition, not personal opinion, and not the fear of man.

Let Christian Men Be Men is an appeal to return to biblical conviction, gospel clarity, and godly courage—so that men may truly stand, teach, and live as Christ's ambassadors in an age of confusion.

CONVERTED ON LSD TRIP

The Bucks Herald

Second Edition

CONVERTED ON LSD TRIP

David Clarke who had a three-year career of undetected crime, experienced a "Christian conversion" whilst suffering from the effects of LSD, he told Aylesbury magistrates, on Tuesday. After wrestling with his conscience for a year, he confessed to 24 crimes, and gave information leading to the recovery of over £1000 worth of stolen property. In court

David Could these boys do any real wrong ? Michael

By David Clarke (Author)

This book is not about drug use—it is about deliverance.

On the 16th of January 1970, during a terrifying LSD trip, I was confronted with the reality of my own sin and the judgment of God. In desperation, I cried out to the Lord Jesus Christ—and He saved me. That night marked the end of a life of crime and the beginning of a journey of faith, repentance, and transformation that would take me far beyond anything I had imagined.

At the time, I was virtually illiterate. I had left school with no qualifications, been sent prison in Dover Borstal, and lived in rebellion against God and

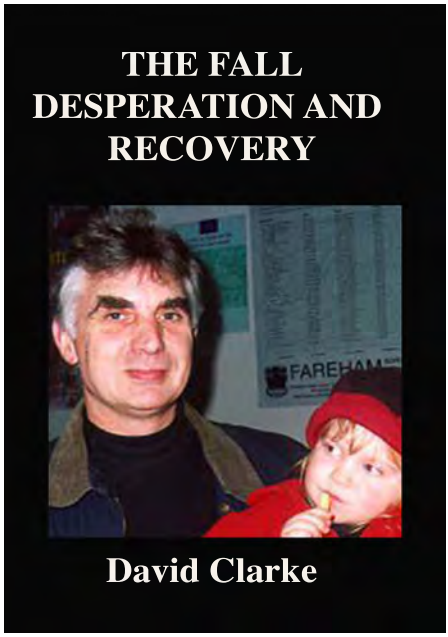
the law. After my conversion, I taught myself to read using the King James Bible and classical Christian literature. That education shaped my mind and my convictions, leading me eventually to become a lecturer in electronics, teaching in colleges for over 20 years.

But the heart of this book is not about my teaching career. It's about the saving grace of God, the power of the gospel, and the reality that no one is beyond hope. It's a testimony for the broken, the backslider, the addicted, the imprisoned, and those who think they've gone too far. It is also a warning to any who treat eternal things lightly.

Though I fell into sin and unbelief again in the early 1990s, God restored me through repentance and drew me back as told in *The Fall Dspiration And Recorery,* Since then, I've sought to tell everyone—especially my former students and friends—that the Lrd Jesus Christ still saves. I write to you as one who has walked in darkness and has seen the light.

My prayer is that this story will challenge you to think, cause you to reflect, and point you to Christ. This is not entertainment. It is a declaration of truth. And the truth is: Jesus still saves sinners today.

T[HE FALL, DESPERATION AND RECOVERY]



By David Clarke

This is the true account of a man who once knew the grace of God, turned from Him in unbelief, and yet was mercifully restored. It is the sequel to *Converted on LSD Trip* and *Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists*, continuing the story of David Clarke's journey—from earnest Christian faith into deep spiritual darkness, and by God's grace, back again.

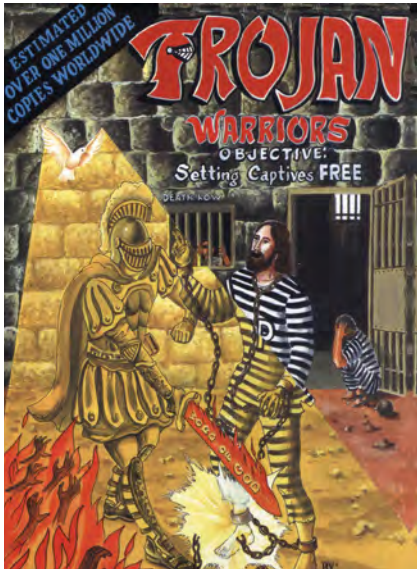
In 1984, David withdrew from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church over matters of doctrine and conscience. What followed was not the peaceful path he had hoped for, but a time of great affliction: rejection, depression, marital breakdown, moral failure, and what he later came to understand as bipolar disorder. Like King David of old, this David also fell into sin, lost his way, and wounded those closest to him.

Yet the Lord did not let him go. Through years of wandering, the Word of God echoed still: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). With brutal honesty and a heart humbled by grace, Clarke recounts the long road back—from despair to repentance, from ruin to recovery.

This is not a tale of self-help or self-improvement. It is a testimony to sovereign grace—that no matter how far one falls, the Lord's arm is not shortened that it cannot save.

"For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD." —Jeremiah 30:17

TROJAN WARRIORS



Setting Captives Free
Authored by Mr David Clarke CertEd, Authored by Mr Michael J Clark

Trojan Warriors: Setting Captives Free is the true and extraordinary account of two brothers—Michael and David Clarke—raised in Aylesbury, England, who turned from a life of crime to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.
In the 1960s, both brothers were convicted and imprisoned for malicious wounding and carrying firearms without a license. David, the younger, experienced a radical conversion in 1970 after a terrifying LSD trip. He went on to teach himself to read using the Bible, pursued higher education, became a lecturer, and later served as a Baptist minister.

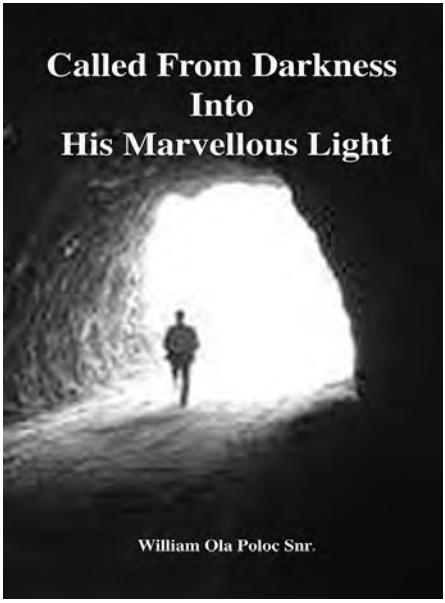
Michael, however, continued a flamboyant and criminal lifestyle, eventually landing in a Philippine prison in 1996, sentenced to 16 years. It was there—after five years in maximum security—that he too came to faith in Christ.
Moved by his brother's transformation, David launched a mission to the Philippines, determined to help and support Michael. Together, they began working with inmates in New Bilibid Prison—many of whom were former gang leaders, murderers, and drug traffickers—who had also experienced profound conversions.

This book tells the story of that mission and includes 66 handwritten testimonies from inmates whose lives were changed by the gospel. Among

them were **22 men on Death Row,** awaiting execution by lethal injection—yet now living in hope, bold in faith, and committed to spreading the message of Christ.
These are the Trojan Warriors—once captives to sin, now soldiers of Christ.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." — Revelation 12:11

CALLED FROM DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT



William Poloc

William Poloc was once an inmate of New Bilibid Prison in the Philippines, having been sentenced to 14 years for the crime of homicide. Yet it was during his time in prison that the Lord Jesus Christ called him to repentance and faith. Turning his back on a life of sin, William began to read the Holy Scriptures and study theology. In time, he came to understand and embrace the doctrines of grace, and he was soon teaching the gospel to his fellow inmates.

I first met William in October 2001 while visiting New Bilibid Prison, where I was serving as Director of the Christian mission, Trojan Horse International. Upon his release in August 2002, William was commissioned by Trojan Horse International and sent back to his home city of Baguio to preach the gospel to the inmates of Baguio City Jail and Benguet Provincial Jail.

In October 2002, I travelled to Baguio City Jail in my capacity as Mission Director and as a sent minister of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists. There, I had the privilege of baptising 22 inmates who had been truly converted—from crime to Christ—through the ministry of William Poloc. I also baptised a further 8 souls at Benguet Provincial Jail who likewise testified of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These remarkable events coincided with the final worship service ever held at the Bierton Strict Baptist Chapel in the United Kingdom, which took place on 22nd December 2002.

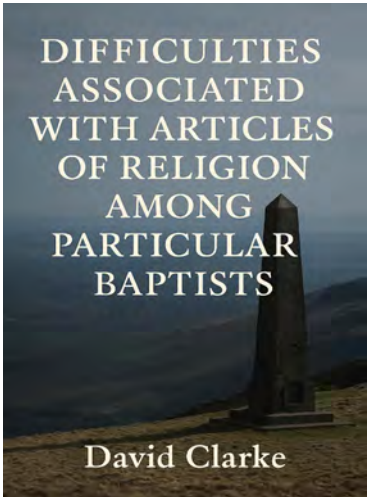
Over the past two decades, Brother William has faithfully laboured in the gospel ministry. As his testimony shows, he has continued to preach and teach the Word of God, and has established what is now known as the Baguio Christ-Centred Churches.

We give thanks to Almighty God for His wondrous works in the salvation of sinners, and for raising up faithful men like William Poloc, who proclaim the message that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15, KJV).

David Clarke
Director, Trojan Horse International
April 2022

DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH ARTICLES OF RELIGION

Among Particular Baptists



David Clarke

This provocative and deeply reflective theological work explores the challenges posed by historic confessions of faith—particularly the Gospel Standard Articles of Religion—in the life and governance of a local church. Drawing from personal experience and first-hand involvement in church conflict, David Clarke offers a rare and candid examination of the tensions between church tradition, biblical fidelity, and the conscience of individual believers.

Clarke, a former member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, unpacks a series of doctrinal, practical, and spiritual difficulties that arose when attempts were made to align his local fellowship with the Gospel Standard denomination. These include issues surrounding duty faith, the free offer of the Gospel, repentance, and the law-gospel distinction—all with significant pastoral implications.

This book is ideal for:

Church leaders navigating denominational identity and doctrinal unity

Believers wrestling with the authority and interpretation of confessions

Historians and theologians studying 20th-century Particular Baptist movements

Anyone interested in how church documents shape faith, fellowship, and conflict

Blending historical documentation with personal narrative and scriptural exposition, Difficulties Associated With Articles of Religion is a thoughtful and honest resource for those seeking clarity in the midst of ecclesiastical confusion.

BISAC: Religion / Christianity / Baptist
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4 The Gospel Standard Articles of Religion 1878
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The Difficulties Of these Articles Proved
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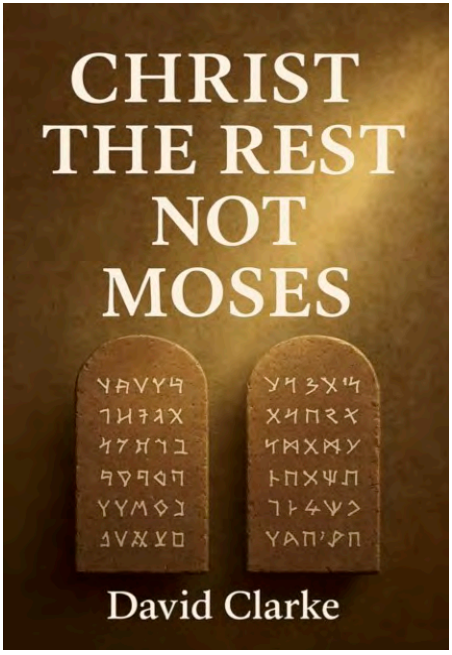
Gospel Standard 31 Articles

CHRIST THE REST, NOT MOSES



By David Clarke

"Let us labour therefore… to enter into that rest." – Hebrews 4:11

What is the true rest promised to the people of God? Is it found in observing days and laws — or in Christ Himself?

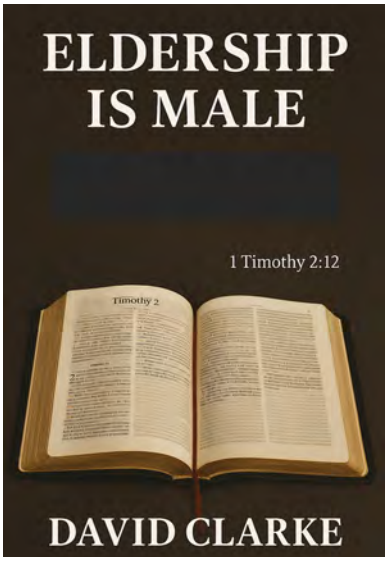
In this bold and thought-provoking work, David Clarke draws from Scripture and personal experience to confront a foundational issue at the heart of Christian doctrine: justification by faith alone.

Clarke, once rejected by a Gospel Standard minister over his understanding of Hebrews 4, writes not to stir controversy, but to call believers back to the simplicity and power of the gospel. With a serious tone, pastoral heart, and unwavering conviction, he urges readers to turn from legalism and shadows to the finished work of Christ.

Written especially for those who love the doctrines of grace, yet feel isolated or misunderstood, this book is a call to clarity, courage, and confidence in the rest that is found in Christ — and Christ alone.

This is not merely a theological issue. It is a matter of liberty, peace, and the very ground of our standing before God.

ELDERSHIP IS MALE



Authored by Mr David Clarke

Eldership Is Male
By David Clarke Cert.Ed.

In a generation marked by confusion over gender, church authority, and biblical headship, David Clarke boldly returns to the timeless truths of Scripture to address one of the most contested questions in contemporary Christianity: Should women serve as elders in the church?

Originally published under the title Mary, Mary Quite Contrary, this revised edition challenges modern egalitarian trends within Evangelical circles by affirming the biblical pattern of male eldership. Drawing deeply from the King James Version and the writings of classical Particular Baptists, Clarke argues that the eldership, as taught in the New Testament, is divinely ordained for spiritually qualified men only—"the husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2).

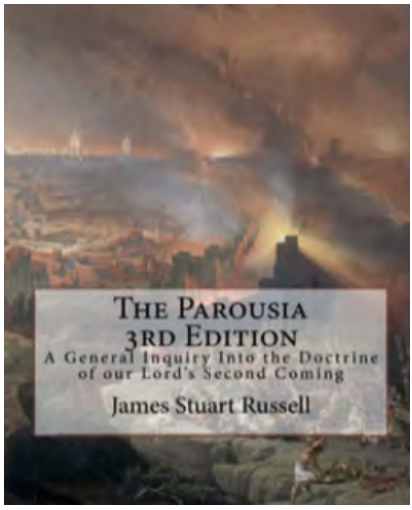
With theological insight, personal conviction, and pastoral concern, the author explores key biblical texts (e.g., 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Timothy 2, Titus 1) and engages the cultural drift that has led many churches and Bible colleges

to forsake their scriptural foundations. He also includes critical reflections from the Reformed tradition, excerpts from John Gill, and a fresh defence of the gender roles rooted in Creation and Christ's relationship with His Church (Eph. 5:23–32).

This work is not an attack on women but a call for obedience to the God-ordained order of the church. With chapters suitable for study groups, elders, and church members alike, this book provides clarity for those navigating today's theological and moral confusion.

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." – 1 Corinthians 16:13 (KJV)

THE PAROUSIA



James Stuart Russell

Book Review: The Parousia by James Stuart Russell

Foreword by Edward E. Stevens

The Parousia by James Stuart Russell is a seminal and courageous work that has stood the test of time as the cornerstone of Preterist eschatology. Originally published in 1878, this classic has not only endured but has gained renewed attention in recent years due to a growing hunger among Bible students for clarity on prophetic matters, especially those concerning the Second Coming of Christ.

The term "Parousia"—Greek for "presence" or "coming"—is used throughout

the New Testament in reference to Christ's return. Russell's ground-breaking thesis is that this Parousia occurred not in some distant future, but in the First Century, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This view, known as Preterism (from the Latin praeter, meaning "past"), affirms that the major prophetic events traditionally expected in the future—Christ's return, the resurrection, and the judgment—were fulfilled in that generation, just as Jesus and the apostles promised.

Russell's method is nothing short of rigorous. He painstakingly surveys every major New Testament passage referring to the Second Coming, including the most debated texts—Matthew 24, Acts 1:11, 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 15, and Revelation. Rather than treating prophecy with vague abstraction or speculative futurism, Russell insists on audience relevance and context, showing that Christ's promises were addressed to His immediate disciples and were meant to be fulfilled in their time.

One of Russell's most compelling contributions is his attention to the "time statements" in Scripture—verses that declare Christ's return to be "at hand," "near," or to occur before "some standing here shall not taste of death." These statements, he argues, are not to be spiritualised or deferred indefinitely, as is so often done in futurist frameworks. If Jesus and the inspired writers claimed such events would happen imminently and they didn't, the integrity of Scripture itself is called into question. The Parousia provides a faithful and reverent resolution to that crisis of credibility, affirming that Christ did return—in judgment upon apostate Israel, just as He foretold.

The Foreword by Ed Stevens adds significant value, tracing the historical and theological influence of Russell's work. Stevens notes that many modern theologians—including R.C. Sproul Sr., David Chilton, and Gary DeMar—have been profoundly impacted by Russell's insights, even if not all have embraced the full Preterist position. Sproul himself called The Parousia a book that "opened [his] eyes" to the radical redemptive significance of AD 70.

Stevens also highlights how The Parousia laid the groundwork for modern Full Preterism, addressing even the so-called "problem texts" like Acts 1:11 and 1 Thessalonians 4. Russell's handling of these passages is consistent and compelling, though Stevens rightly notes areas where Russell's treatment is either tentative or incomplete—especially on the Millennium of Revelation 20 and the nature of the rapture.

Nevertheless, Stevens and other modern scholars have carried Russell's torch further, proposing a literal rapture of the faithful in AD 70, based not on silence or speculation, but on clear biblical "expectation statements." These statements describe what the apostles and first-century believers expected to see, hear, and experience at Christ's return—statements which, taken seriously, support a conscious, visible, and spiritual fulfilment of all that was promised.

Russell's exegesis of the Book of Revelation is particularly praiseworthy. He spends over 170 pages dismantling traditional futurist readings, showing how the book is saturated with immediate, localised, First Century relevance. He famously comments that the "key" to understanding Revelation has always been "hanging by the door," in the opening verses—those time indicators so often ignored.

In terms of scholarship, Russell's work is clear, measured, and reverent. His prose is Victorian in tone, but his arguments are modern in their theological acuity. He balances deep learning with devotional humility, always bringing the discussion back to the authority of Scripture.

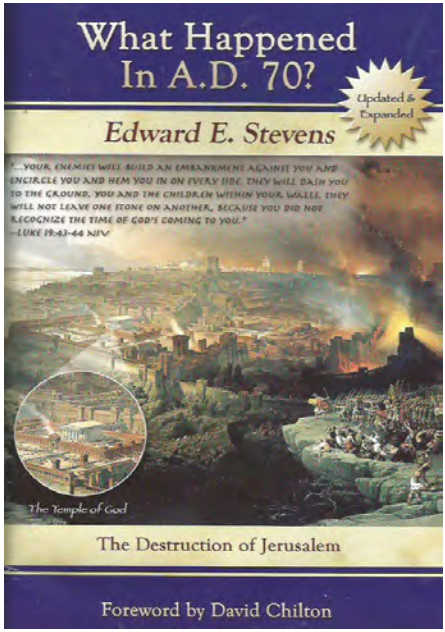
Final Verdict

The Parousia is more than a historical curiosity or theological footnote—it is a revolutionary and faith-affirming work that challenges believers to take the Bible at its word. It strengthens rather than weakens the authority of Scripture, offering a coherent and compelling alternative to speculative futurism. For those willing to let Scripture interpret Scripture, and for any reader who seeks to understand the timing and nature of Christ's coming with both clarity and confidence, this book is indispensable.

Whether you are a curious student, a sceptic of modern prophecy charts, or a seasoned theologian, The Parousia will challenge your assumptions, deepen your reverence for God's Word, and—if taken seriously—change the way you read the New Testament forever.

5 out of 5 stars – A timeless classic in biblical eschatology.Available as a PDF from BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk

WHAT HAPPENED IN A.D. 70


What Happened
In A.D. 70?
Updated & Expanded
Edward E. Stevens
"...your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."
—Luke 19:43-44 NIV
The Temple of God
The Destruction of Jerusalem
Foreword by David Chilton

Ed. Stevens
A Fresh Look at Bible Prophecy and the End of the Jewish Age

This thought-provoking book presents a compelling view of Bible prophecy that has helped countless readers make sense of difficult end-time passages. It offers a consistent, historically grounded interpretation that sheds new light on the Book of Revelation—making it far more understandable without compromising any essential doctrine of the Christian faith.

What Happened in AD 70? explores how a solid grasp of the historical and cultural setting of the New Testament—what scholars call audience relevance—is key to interpreting its message rightly. Just as modern readers would struggle to interpret today's political cartoons or headlines centuries from now without context, so too we must immerse ourselves in the First Century world of Roman rule, Jewish expectation, and early Church persecution to understand the symbols and language of biblical prophecy.

At the heart of this work is the assertion that the Book of Revelation was written to the First Century Church and primarily concerned events that were imminent in their time—not ours. It served as a warning and a preparation for the coming "tribulation" and the judgment that fell upon apostate Israel in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70—the definitive end

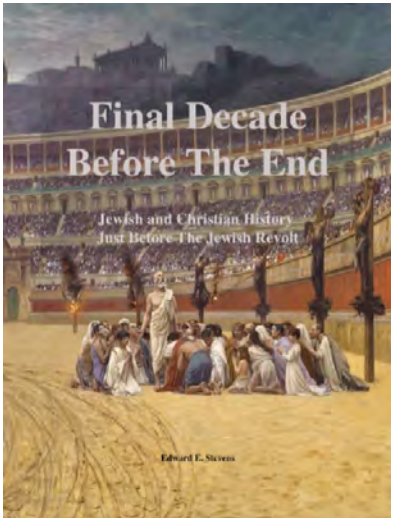
of the Jewish age.

This book also addresses pressing theological and apologetic concerns. It establishes the completion of the New Testament canon prior to the Jewish War, reinforces the divine inspiration of the New Testament against liberal criticism, and offers a more conservative stance on Scripture than many traditional views. It challenges the commonly held futurist framework and encourages readers to reconsider whether they are repeating the same errors as those who misunderstood Christ's first coming.

In introducing the Preterist view—the belief that many or all New Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the past—this book provides a clear alternative to the speculative futurism that has long dominated prophetic teaching. It calls readers to be like the noble Bereans, searching the Scriptures daily, Bible in hand, to see whether these things are so.

April 17,2010

FINAL DECADE BEFORE THE END



Ed. Stevens

First Century Events in Chronological Order
A Historical and Scriptural Reconstruction of the Last Days

Ever since the release of What Happened in AD 70? in 1980, there has been growing interest in the destruction of Jerusalem and its deep significance in Jewish, Roman, and early Christian history. In response to continued demand for more detailed analysis, this comprehensive volume offers a thoroughly

documented chronology of first-century events—carefully pieced together from both Scripture and historical sources.

Drawing upon a wide range of ancient texts—from Josephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius to the Talmud, Church Fathers, Dead Sea Scrolls, and other apocryphal writings—this work seeks to answer vital questions: What exactly happened in the years leading up to AD 70? When did it happen? And how did these events shape the life and mission of the early Church?

In promoting the preterist view of fulfilled prophecy—especially in light of J. S. Russell's teaching on a literal rapture—this book addresses the increasing call for historical verification. What began in 2007 as a 21-page timeline grew into a 73-page manuscript in 2009, and now culminates in this far more expansive and robust account.

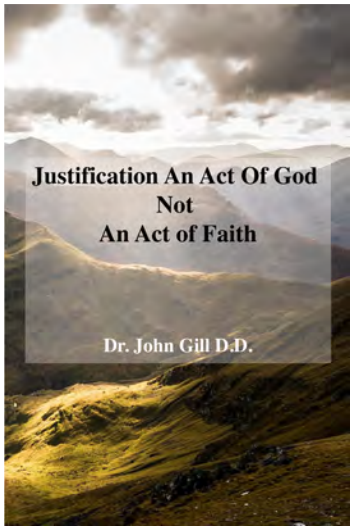
You'll trace Paul's missionary journeys, the establishment of churches across the Roman Empire, and the deliberate apostolic strategy to build a united, enduring Church. You'll discover how most of the New Testament—19 out of 27 books—was written in the final intense years before the Jewish War (AD 60–66), and how those inspired writings provide not only theological truth but also historical insight into the fulfilment of Jesus' own predictions.

Far more than a simple timeline, First Century Events in Chronological Order offers a powerful reconstruction of the unfolding last days, showing how the gospel went forth, the Great Commission was fulfilled, and the end-time prophecies of Christ were brought to pass in exact detail—within that very generation.

Edward E. Stevens
INTERNATIONAL PRETERIST ASSOCIATION
Bradford, Pennsylvania
April 17,2010

Available as a PDF from BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk

JUSTIFICATION AN ACT OF GOD: Note an Act of Faith



Dr. John Gill

Alternatively Eternal Justification an Antidote To Fullerism Paperback – November 21, 2020

By Dr John Gill DD (Author), David Clarke (Editor)

This book treats the subject of Justification by faith and is Dr. John Gill's treatment of the subject as taught in his Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity in which he demonstrates that Justification is an Act of God and not an act of man's faith. It is written Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness Gill shows that the 'it' that was counted to him for righteousness was the righteousness of Christ as it is to all who are justified by faith. Abraham believed God and by faith depended and believed all the promises of God, just as believers do in the Old and New Testaments. We are not justified because of the exercise of our faith as many Christian beliefs, but by believing in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is an act of the new man, and a faith that draws assurance from the promises of God in the scripture.

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